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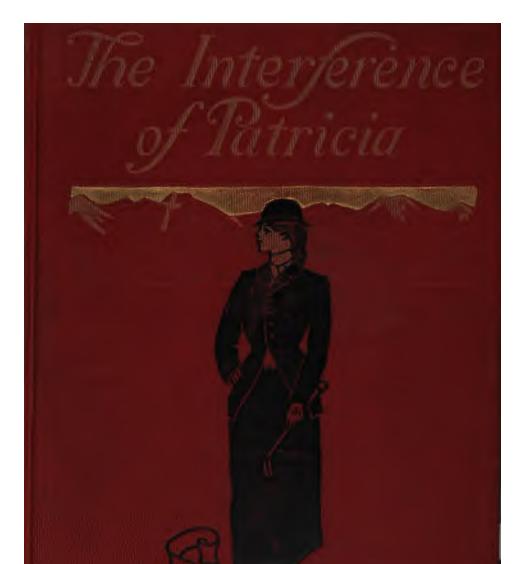
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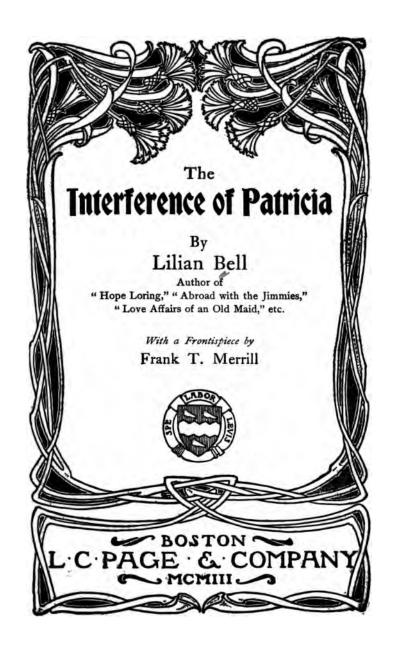
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MY GREATEST ADMIRATION AMONG MEN
A FRIEND, A COUNSELLOR, A CONFIDANT
WHOSE GENTLE SOUL KNOWS NAUGHT BUT GOOD
BELIEVES ONLY THE BEST
AIMS AT NOTHING BELOW THE HIGHEST
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THE OTHER



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The Interference of Patricia

CHAPTER I

THE MARSTON METHOD

W. was the Boss Croker of Denver, and president of the largest bank in the town.

G. W. was not his whole name, but it was what everybody who had borrowed money of him called him, and as about the only people in Denver who had not been obliged to borrow money since the panic of '93, when the bottom dropped out of the town, were the dead and the unborn, you will see that practically the entire population of Denver called Mr. Marston "G. W."

Those whose mortgages G. W. had foreclosed were inclined to say disagreeable things about him and the way he had ac-

quired his wealth, and to call his success But in that they were mistaken, blinded, led away, perhaps, by the bitterness of their penniless condition. Possibly they were inclined to brood morbidly as they saw G. W. gather in and sell their real estate and homes and horses which he had honestly acquired when, in their panic, they had appealed to him, and he, out of friendship, had accommodated them. He always reminded them of this, when they became rude and said things to his face. helped them, he declared, because in their prosperous days they had been friends of "I don't forget," he often said, "the fine old trips East we used to take in your private car and the way the champagne flowed." So for that reason he lent them money at eight per cent. and reluctantly foreclosed on them a few years later, deeply regretting the necessity, and offering to let them have the property back at any time.

So with this handsome offer before them, of course it was sheer foolishness of them to complain - besides being ungrateful. But G. W. was used to ingratitude of this sort. What philanthropist is not?

G. W.'s success was not due to luck, but to a shrewdness and foresight which had properly earned him the position he held. He never foreclosed on city officials, newspaper men, or clever lawyers. He lowered the interest on the city fathers, not low enough to allow them to get ahead and pay up, but low enough to encourage them to keep on with the interest. He took stock as security from his newspaper acquaintances, and led them to believe that they could redeem it at any time.

He only foreclosed on old friends who were not in active business or politics, but did this with a reluctance which vastly became him. In return for foreclosing, he gave them sound advice, in case they cared to make a fresh start. But the ungrateful old creatures merely made a few pungent remarks, and then sometimes they died. Not from a broken heart, you understand, for people never die of that, not even proud men, ruined and chagrined in their old age, nor beautiful young girls nor neglected wives. They just die, that's all, and the doctor sends in his certificate and then his bill.

Once G. W.'s health broke down and they said he suffered from insomnia, but Sylvestre, the young Eastern contractor, suggested that it might be his conscience working, and this was considered the best joke got off in the Denver Club for many a day.

But G. W. had such a tender heart that he seldom did business of this sort personally. He generally let Crossfuylen, the cashier of the bank, attend to it. Crossfuylen had no heart, people said (which was a calumny), and really seemed to take delight in humbling the proud, but in reality it was only Crossfuylen's business enthusiasm, and he really did not understand pride. His wife once complained that his disagreeable duties of this sort injured her in society, but Crossfuylen had a quiet hour alone with her, in which he pointed out the consequences of going contrary to G. W.'s wishes, as thoroughly understood by his henchman, and then he further pacified her by buying one of the foreclosed houses in the most aristocratic part of the town, where she could fight it out.

Bunce, another banker, whose Hebraic

origin was more evident from his manner than his name, was closely associated with G. W. in many of his vaster schemes, but he concealed himself behind G. W., even as G. W. made use of the coat skirts of Crossfuylen.

Ostensibly they were all now interested in a scheme to sell the Denver trolley system, the real reason for which was fully known only to G. W. The other two principal owners were partially aware of the necessity, but of the complete plan they were as positive they were in ignorance as they were that they knew G. W. of old. They watched him warily.

G. W. had just returned from a mysterious trip to New York, when the door of his private office was flung open so unceremoniously that a more nervous man would have jumped, but G. W. was used to Patricia's stormy ways and did not even look up.

Patricia was his daughter.

"You're a nice one, you are!" observed the girl, standing in front of him and tapping the leather of her riding-boots with her whip. The handle was of gold, set with diamonds. She treated it as if it were tin. It was lost half of the time.

G. W. waved his hand for her to be quiet, and went on figuring. But Patricia was not afraid of G. W. Far from it. She reached out and flirted her whip up and down on the page on which he was writing with an impertinence which deserved a touch of her jewelled toy.

"Let up on that stuff and listen to me, will you, dad? I haven't much time to spare. I'm going to ride with Cornelia Winthrop and Bob Sylvestre in an hour."

"'Cornelia Winthrop and Bob Sylvestre,' repeated her father, removing his gold-rimmed glasses and plunging into the conversation as if he had left it off only an hour ago, whereas he had not seen his daughter for three weeks. "Who are they?"

"Well, I don't call them Cornelia and Bob to their faces, you can just bet your life. They are Eastern. She is Mrs. Winthrop, a widow, and Mr. Sylvestre is a contractor who has come to bid on building the new road."

"Oh, new friends of yours!"

"Not yet, they aren't, but I want them to be. It was the merest accident their asking me to go with them to-day. I'll tell you all about it some day. But I want you to do something for me. I want to break into society. I want to know these swells who are for ever coming to Denver to get rich — God help 'em! I want to be in it! The Bunces are. Why aren't you?"

"What's that? What is Bunce in that I'm not? If that damned Jew —"

"Oh, he hasn't done anything since you went away. You are not listening to me."

"Yes, I am. You said you wanted to but your head into a stone wall."

Patricia laughed.

"Well, you must turn the stone wall into a soft pillow so I won't break my nose."

G. W. got out his cheque-book.

"How much do you want?"

"I don't know. I want you to tell me how to get in."

"How to get into society?" repeated G. W., in a bewildered tone. "How do I know? How do other people do it?"

"Oh, they are willing to wait years and do it gradually. Give little tea-parties and

get to know the right people in that way. But I want to do it in a big way. I want to knock people silly. I want to flabbergast the whole bunch."

G. W. looked at her proudly. His method exactly! The Marston method! But he thought a minute without speaking. He was wholly at sea with a proposition of that nature. He looked at his daughter shrewdly.

"What do you want to do this for, Patrichy?"

His keen eyes disconcerted her. looked away and he saw the colour flame into her face, a bewitching face, where tiny invisible muscles under her clear skin were always twitching into suggestions of dimples which never became tangible facts.

"Oh, just because!" she said, vaguely.

"I'll bet she is in love with that fellow Sylvestre and wants to get him away from the widow!" thought her father. "She'll do it. too! Trust her!" He laughed inwardly.

"Why don't you ask Mrs. Winthrop?" he demanded suddenly, with deep diplomacy. To his surprise her face gladdened with relief.

"I just will!" she exclaimed. "Will you foot the bills? They'll be hummers, I warn you!"

"Yes, I'll pay the piper. A man can't turn such a cracker-jack loose in his bank-account without expecting to fork over the whole concern. Give me a kiss now, and get out!"

She made a graceful swoop at him as if a swallow had dipped in her flight and fled, slamming the door violently behind her.

G. W. rubbed his head.

"I feel as if I'd been visited by a cyclone and unroofed," he said.

He ran his hand through his hair and tipped back in his chair. He scrutinized his note-book carefully, making notes in cipher. Then he whistled softly.

"This is the biggest thing yet!" he said to himself. "Wheels within wheels, and old G. W. the mainspring. Everybody going to get rich out of it. Bunce thinks he can retire! Can he, or will he have to hire out as my office boy? Crossfuylen thinks he is on to the whole game! Is he? And

He despised the Englishman because he wore a bracelet-watch.

CHAPTER II

IN WHICH MARSTON APPLIES HIS METHOD

for a quiet hour alone with that little fat red note-book of G. W.'s if they had known the key to his cipher. But G. W. kept his own counsel. But to explain the matter as it now stood in as simple a manner as possible, although in G. W.'s hands it was anything but a simple proposition, his plans were these.

They were very complex, but Marston prided himself on this very complexity. He delighted to employ a rascal and then to beat him at his very rascality. He loved the course tortuous, the maze, the labyrinth. No one really ever knew what he was up to, but everybody suspected him. He was an excellent poker player, and his business was conducted on the same method. He

bluffed with an air that was childlike and bland.

Now no one admired this turn of his mind more than Jimmie Cheroot, the paid henchman of Jed Brown. Jed and G. W. were business associates in everything, but never a day passed that Jed did not try to "do" G. W. or that G. W. did not endeavour to wreck Jed. They watched each other like two bulldogs.

Jed was a strange combination of business tyrant and domestic coward. His early married life was a mystery about which people continually whispered. His wife beggars description. She was unspeakable. Their one daughter was a timid, deprecating girl, afraid of her mother's language and temper and ashamed of her father.

The Browns were not in society any more than the Marstons were. Even Denver draws the line somewhere. But Jimmie Cheroot, by virtue of a nice wife, was. He "always made it a point to know the swells"—from which statement the enlightened can determine his standing in society and just how far he was entitled to go.

Jimmie was a slim, dapper little blond, who was always looking for the crumbs which fell from a rich man's table. He was both clever and cautious. Although in the confidence and pay of Jed Brown, many were the little quiet turns he made for G. W., whose methods he madly admired. He emulated them also to the extent that, if the time ever came, when he could make a fortune by selling out both Jed and G. W., for a sure thing from a third party, Jimmie Cheroot, slim, dapper and blond, could be counted upon to do it.

Jimmie had of late been assiduous in furnishing information to G. W. unavailable from any other source. For instance it was Jimmie's habit to ingratiate himself with the people who owed G. W. money, by virtue of his wife's calling acquaintance, and over a glass of wine and a cigar to offer to appraise the mortgaged property,—quite as a matter of friendship,—and if he discovered a weakness even on the way, he made a note of it for G. W. But to his friends, over another glass of wine and several more cigars, he suggested a shifting of securities to obtain more time, which

often, since he was doing all this as a matter of friendship, earned him valuable presents from the grateful and unsuspicious creatures. They never connected the almost immediate foreclosure of G. W.'s mortgages on their property with Jimmie's intimate knowledge of their affairs. In fact he often dined with them afterward.

Knowing these things, and feeling sure that his reward was bound to come, it was not a surprise when one day G. W. sent for Jimmie and showed his hand. That is, Jimmie thought he showed his hand. G. W.'s frank and genial air had deceived cleverer men than Jimmie Cheroot.

"You know," said G. W., "that Bunce and Jed and I practically own the trolley and that we want to sell it. I am going into politics and I want cash. The other two don't want to stay in it without me, so we have conceived this plan. Seen the papers lately? Then you must have noticed that in every one of them are big advertisements for 'applications for stock of a new transcontinental railroad.' Applications, you understand. Now, Bunce got his brother, the New York one, — I don't believe the Omaha

one would have done it,—to father the scheme. It won't surprise a little devil like you to know that that railroad will never be built. But it will sell the trolley.

"Now, I happen to know that Lord Abernethy has millions to invest. I want him to buy this trolley — for a quick turn, you understand, to sell it to the railroad. Tell him the road has got to have it, for it has no right of way through Denver and that the franchise can be arranged. Go to him on your own hook, in a confidential way. He will probably at once ask you why we don't hold on and sell it ourselves. To this you must answer that I am going into politics, and, as I must not be identified with any corporations existing upon a public franchise. I would probably sell for cash now at a moderate figure, rather than wait a couple of years and then take stock in the railroad company for it. That's your strong point, see? The stock is now worth \$105. I have an option on Jed's and Bunce's at \$125, and you must tell him that you think you could get an option from me on more than a controlling interest - say, practically the whole thing at \$150. I think he'll jump at it. If you can do this, there will be a big bunch of cash in it for you."

Jimmie's eyes glistened. He said nothing for a moment, and G. W. watched him warily. No one knew better than Marston himself what big chances he was taking—chances which would have staggered a more timid man, but G. W. was an inordinate poker player, and while sometimes playing so careful a game as to savour more of whist than poker, again his recklessness was enough to make one's hair stand on end. He used the same tactics in business. As Jed Brown expressed it, "With G. W., you never can tell which way the cat's going to jump."

But it gave his enemies something to think about.

Just now G. W. was confronted by tremendous odds. He wondered how much Jimmie knew. He would have paid a neat little sum to know if Jimmie suspected that his hold over the city council was weakening and that his real reason for selling was that they were going to make an election issue of the removal of the cable conduit, which hitherto G. W. had been able to prevent. The expense of this would practically put the road back into bankruptcy and seriously handicap its three chief owners, Marston, Bunce, and Brown.

G. W. had, by great diplomacy, persuaded the more influential newspapers to give him a little more time, promising all sorts of return favours if they would. To accommodate their largest and most powerful stockholder, they were amenable to a certain extent. But the time was short—alarmingly short. And so Marston and Bunce had contrived a scheme of which they thought best to say nothing to Jed Brown.

Jed felt the sting of this more than the loss of his second profit. He knew some game was up of which he was to know nothing when G. W. took his trolley stock at \$125.

He too was now an enemy to G. W.'s scheme, but the safety of it lay in the swiftness with which G. W. hoped to act and the amount of secrecy with which he could invest his moves.

How much did Jimmie know and how far could he be bought?

Marston paid high for his men, and firmly agreed with the wit who declared that "an honest man was one who would stay bought."

"Do you know Lord Abernethy?" asked Jimmie.

"No, never saw him but once, and then I had all I could do to keep from giving him a swift kick for wearing a braceletwatch. The ass!"

Jimmie laughed good-humouredly. felt infinitely above G. W. in that he did not resent such signs of an effete civilization. He felt that G. W. was very Western and doubted if he would feel at all at home in the Waldorf-Astoria. Jimmie always used the hyphen when speaking of that hotel.

"You know him, don't you?" said G. W.

Immie shot out his cuffs.

"Oh, yes, I know him," he said.

"Then don't lose an hour. See him this afternoon, if possible, and don't forget. Politics!"

Timmie took his hat and went out. paused a moment on the steps to light a cigar.

"I wonder," he said to himself, "if G. W. is an ass or if he only takes me for one! He would have done a little better for himself if he had told me more. Going into politics! G. W.!"

And Jimmie Cheroot's tongue went into his cheek.

CHAPTER III

CORNELIA WINTHROP

ENVER lay blinking in the brilliant white sunshine which makes the town such a glory to some and such a horror to others. Only Athens, of all the other cities in the world, can boast such a limpid atmosphere and such a blinding glare. But Denver lies so high that the heat never seems oppressive. The sun does not descend with a damp, languorous heat. It beats down dry, hot, baking. cooks the already cooked earth into still greater hardness. It powders the alkali dust into still finer particles. It parches even the edges of the irrigating ditches into a substance as hard as stone. Not a shadow nor a cloud breaks its pitiless glare. Tired eyes blink in vain for a rest from its blind-Gray days are a luxury ing clearness. almost unknown.

The air, clear, cool, transparent, is charged with an ozone and electricity which invigorate the lungs but shatter the nerves and exhaust the heart. Jaded men who go to Denver for the first time feel ten years younger. They declare that they could walk twenty miles. Their blood dances; their feet prance. They square off and spar at their own images in the mirror and feel inclined to slap every man on the back in sheer rejuvenation and exhilaration.

Nervous women, after a few months of Denver, sit with every muscle unconsciously drawn tense, and grow hysterical on the slightest provocation.

High-strung race-horses pound their delicate feet to pieces on the hard white roads and run themselves to death if not restrained. Family horses brought from a lower altitude astonish people by running away and kicking the dashboard of the family carriage into unregenerate splinters. Mules, accustomed elsewhere to blows and curses, go with only a polite urging in Denver, wherefore it is said that the climate is hard on women and fine horses and good for men and mules.

This strangely exhilarating effect of altitude is made responsible for all the excesses committed in cities which lie as high as Denver. A consumptive husband goes to Denver and is cured, but his wife dies of heart disease. It is the altitude. Men who gambled and drank moderately in the East go to Denver and do both to excess. Excitement must be worked off in some manner, they say. Again the altitude. If a man ran away with his friend's wife, there would surely be some one to excuse it on the plea of the altitude.

So it will be seen that sun and air, like poisons, are only remedial when used in diluted form, and have a disastrous effect upon overexposed nerves and morals.

For this reason Denver society has more sharply divided social lines than most cities of its size and youth. One set stops at nothing; the other is almost puritanical. Those who are shocked by the excesses of the first, and repelled by the limitations of the second, have the dullest time of all, being obliged to watch their every word and choose their every act, for malignant gossip, which in lower altitudes merely

flourishes, attains to a poisonous tropical growth in Denver, while perhaps if it lay lower —

But however -

It is idle to speculate. Let it simply be said that moderation is looked upon with suspicion by the extremists of both sets, for the Puritans are as vain of their narrowness as the other class is of its breadth.

There were charming people in Denver society in both sets, such as Mrs. Lowe and her three sisters, all tall, beautiful women, and one the wife of ex-Governor Charnley. Denver is full of ex-governors — most of them able men with admirable wives, but some, alas, boors so ignorant of society and its ways that one marvels that even politics could seat them in the gubernatorial chair. One governor elected from the southern part of the State arrived in Denver with his luggage in gunny-sacks tied with clothes-He rented one of the handsomest line. houses in Denver, with tapestry-covered walls and priceless rugs, but finding living more expensive than he had calculated upon, he sent his wife back to the ranch, dismissed his servants, and cooked his own meals on an oil stove, set up in a white and gold boudoir on the second floor.

But the sister of Mrs. Lowe, Mrs. Charnley, was of a different sort. These ladies would have graced a drawing-room on Fifth Avenue and have been quite at home there. In addition to these graces, they were so charmingly devoted to each other that, when the four of them paid a round of calls together, the footman always had to speak twice, each was so absorbed in conversation with her own sisters.

So difficult is this task of steering between the two sets that it might almost be said that there was no middle course in Denver society. Money reigns supreme, nor will it do to inquire too closely into your neighbour's past. The early days lie too near. Miners, who struck it rich and about whose eldest children there floats a suspicion of carelessness as to the marriage dates of their parents, bring their wives, once cooks or even women of the town, to Denver. Their millions buy them all that is required. A few years, a very few, and they are able to see their daughters return from an Eastern school and lock arms with the blue-

blooded, who cannot repel the onslaught of such colossal fortunes. The blue-blooded, the well-born, are there, but are tossed helplessly on the in-rolling sea of money, even though it covers more than coarseness and illiteracy.

It was into this heterogeneous mass of so-called society that Cornelia Winthrop found herself plunged, when her husband's death on board his yacht left her with only a pittance of money and an all but worthless gold mine in Colorado.

As she unearthed his debts and paid them all, even the most disgraceful, the last remnant of her respect and love for him died. She wiped out his debts with a flush of scorn and averted face. She felt that the money which paid them polluted her fingertips. The cheques she signed reeked of their foul errands. But of all this even her nearest and dearest were ignorant. She tried to conceal it from even her lawyers. Bob Sylvestre, who had loved her before she married Gallup Winthrop, only suspected. But when she declared that the only thing to do was to go to Denver and see if anything could be done with the mine, he

followed and soon unearthed in the Marston railroad an excuse for staying.

These two were riding along Grant Avenue several weeks after the morning of Patricia's interview with her father, waiting for her to overtake them. They were going to select a polo ground. They drew rein to let the trolley flash by. As they rode up on the track Sylvestre pointed with his crop.

- "Here is one of the greatest puzzles of the business world."
 - "What? This trolley?" asked Cornelia.
- "The trolley is part of it. I can't make Marston out. I am positive that he is up to some devilment. He claims that he wants to retire from active business and go into politics. But I don't believe it. I can't help thinking that he is in some way interested in this transcontinental railroad, although it is being financed and put through by the New York set."
- "But what would be his motive?" asked Cornelia.
- "That is what I don't know. Abernethy has about decided to buy the trolley for his syndicate. He is quite chuckling over the

snap. He was approached by a party—he didn't give his name—with inside knowledge which was very valuable to Abernethy. Of course he will have to pay the middleman handsomely for it—something like two thousand pounds cash on the day the money is paid over—and the price made Abernethy gasp, but he declares it is worth it. He expects to sell the trolley to the railroad inside of a year. I don't like the looks of it. I warned him to look out for a nigger in the fence, but, like all Englishmen, he is quite confident of his own abilities and told me he could look out for himself."

Cornelia smiled. She knew Sylvestre well. She knew that he was in a mood when he could find a grievance in one thing as well as in another. He had no particular interest in Abernethy beyond that of an ordinary acquaintance. No, his grievance lay with Cornelia herself.

Sylvestre was in that partially irritated and jealous state in which a man finds himself, when he has begun to feel a proprietary interest in a woman before he has the rights of either lover or husband. Cornelia lived at the Brown Palace Hotel with a colourless mother who counted for nothing. Cornelia often went into the dining-room alone. She was young. She was beautiful, and men stared at her. Of all this Bob Sylvestre highly disapproved. He came perilously near disapproving of her beauty except when he was alone with her. He disapproved most of all of her acquaint-ance with Patricia Marston.

"She rides like a centaur, Bob, and you can't deny that she has a lovely face and the figure of a goddess," she was saying.

"She rides like Buffalo Bill and talks like a cowboy," answered Sylvestre, with drawn brows.

"But she is honest and fearless and good. Oh, Bob, you ought to appreciate such an innocent creature as Patricia. Her heart is one I would try to win if I were a man."

"You aren't suggesting that I might try for it, are you?" asked the man, bending his sudden gaze upon her.

A wave of colour swept over her face.

"No," she said, softly. "I don't care to have you love her, Bob."

Their love for each other was understood, but was not to be spoken of — at present.

"But you have taken her up, have you not?" he went on. "Do you think you can afford to be seen going about with a girl who is not in even the society of her own town, who—"

Cornelia gave him a look.

"Do you think," she said, evenly, "that I care what anybody in Denver thinks of me? Is not my position secure enough where I come from, to bear even a few comments from such as would comment upon what I choose to do? And if I am seen with Patricia Marston, will she not be countenanced by even the choice society of Denver?"

Sylvestre's face flushed.

"There's no use in being so nasty about it, Cornelia. I didn't mean to annoy you nor to insinuate — I was only thinking that people here don't know who you are. They have heard of you at Newport and in New York and Washington, but that means nothing to people who don't belong, — to people who get their idea of society from the 'Social Column' of the Sunday papers, whether

they live in Denver or Salt Lake or Chicago. To these people you are — forgive me, Cornelia, but I'm going to be rude — to these people you are no more than any pretty little widow who comes to Denver with a scheme. You might just as well be in Washington with a 'claim.' They don't know who your people are. They don't know, as I do, that anything you might do or say would be forgiven at home, because you are Cornelia Winthrop and have all the backing there is. You don't seem to understand and I'm only trying to explain — "

"I do understand more than you think," she interrupted, "and I'm not even annoyed at your brutality, because you are only trying to take care of me, and you don't quite I know that these people do know how. not know who I am, but why should they? And who am I anyway? A woman, well born. But I have no money, so my birth counts for nothing out here. Well, why should it? And do we care for the opinion of those whose good-will I could buy if I had a fortune? I did not come out here for society. God knows I have had enough of that," she exclaimed, with sudden bitterness, and Sylvestre knew she was thinking of her husband. She recovered herself and went on:

"People talk everywhere — you know that. But if I befriend a pure and lovely girl who has no faults which I can discover, except those of a merry tomboy, why not let me do it? I can do her much good, and she can do me no harm."

"But her language, Cornelia! I have never heard a beautiful mouth so disfigure itself with such slang."

"But that is a fault which she may—will correct. And I know just why she will correct it. You might be surprised, you who dislike it so, to know what that very slang and her wild ways and her wilful manner have done for her."

"I can't believe that they have done anything very good," said Sylvestre, with a frown.

"But they have, although it is a secret as vet. Perhaps it is a secret even from her."

"What is it?" asked the man.

"I can't tell you. Keep your eyes open and you will learn," answered the woman.

Sylvestre shook his head and sighed, as

if he gave it all up. But he was unconvinced.

Mrs. Winthrop squared in her saddle and looked at him.

"Bob," she said, "you are a good man, refined and gentle, but sometimes you appear narrow to me and - very young. Perhaps I don't understand you. Possibly you don't understand me. I have lived through a good deal, Bob, more than you will ever know, and perhaps it has given me a changed view. At any rate it has taught me to appreciate purity and truth and honour in man or woman. But only purity and truth and honour, with no enlivening sense of humour to lend excitement or patience would bore me to death!"

Sylvestre looked at her with puzzled and slightly troubled eyes. He was a trifle stupid.

"I don't quite see how a sense of humour would - " he began, but the woman interrupted him, with one of her lightning flashes of intuition which so dazzled him.

"You are going to say you don't see how a sense of humour lends patience. But think. How could I have borne my life — you knew Gallup and you knew my father—how could any woman have borne what I have without a selfse of humour? Grim, perhaps, at times, but it always enabled me to step outside of myself and take the point of view of a third person, who was neither my husband nor myself. Yet who, knowing us both so well, could laugh! I should have gone mad or committed suicide if I hadn't been able to laugh. Oh, you can bear things, if occasionally you can step aside and laugh at them!"

"I see," said Sylvestre, slowly. But he did not see. Very few men can see when a woman they love is trying to unravel an objectionable knot in the feminine make-up. "But," he added, with a slight flush, "pardon my referring to it, but if you have — as you have gone through all you say you have, why do you long for more of the same — er — 'excitement,' I believe you called it?"

"Not the same kind," said Cornelia, quickly, "but excitement of some kind. That's why I came out here to investigate my mine. I only reproach myself because I let you waste your time helping me to look into it. If I choose to waste mine, that

is my affair. A woman's time is not valuable. But yours —"

"I couldn't have done better with my summer," declared Sylvestre. "I surveyed a connecting line between Jed Brown's little ten-mile railroad and Sick Devil Gap where the new railroad must run if it goes at all. I'm going to New York to offer my plan to those men. The road must go through Agua — there is no other way. You need mention it to no one — urge your claim upon no one. Sit still and make the promoters come to you. Your mine might as well not exist for you, with no capital. It is a rich man's mine. It will take the most expensive of machinery and millions of capital, which may take you years to get. Therefore my advice is to sell it and let somebody else do the waiting."

"That is my idea exactly. I'd rather have a hundred thousand now than a million ten vears from now," said Cornelia.

"Won't this furnish you with your 'excitement'?" asked Sylvestre.

"Of one sort - yes. But I also crave a social sort, such as Patricia furnishes. Why do I wish it? Because I am I! Because I am the kind who hates a dead level. Because I—I often think"—she sank her voice to a whisper—"that was why I married Gallup Winthrop. I didn't realize how much more he was than I wanted, nor what it would seem at close range. That is why no woman of my temperament should marry young. Too often she marries from curiosity. She thinks she knows the world—"

Mrs. Winthrop covered her eyes with her hand, as if, in a backward glance, she saw too much. She recovered herself quickly and went on:

"Perhaps you will understand me better if I ask you if you don't actually hate a heroine in a book who is too beautiful and too good and who never uses slang, nor uses rouge nor powder nor has sick headaches nor anything natural! Don't you long to hiss such a leading lady on the stage?"

"Why, no!" exclaimed Sylvestre, in a shocked tone. He glanced half fearfully at the complexion of the woman at his side, wondering if he would be able to detect it, if she did use rouge.

She met his glance with a disconcerting laugh.

"You are too stupid to know it if I did!" she mocked. "But just to prove to you that I don't — that is, that I have none on to-day," she interrupted herself to laugh a little — he was such easy game! — "Look."

She rubbed her cheek fiercely with her handkerchief and held it out to him. His eyes took in the reddened cheek, but he turned his head away. He refused to look at the handkerchief. She saw the gauntlet which held the reins tighten.

"Bob," she said, softly. "Forgive me! I didn't mean to tease you."

He turned and looked at her.

"Cornelia," he said, simply. "I have only been trying to say that I feel like taking off my hat when I even think of you!"

He never made any other apology or excuse for his lack of comprehension or excess of zeal, and the woman riding at his side drew her breath sharply. She looked at him with grateful, shining eyes.

"It isn't money or position or any of those things which matter to me now," she breathed. "All I want is to be happy. To be happy just once!"

Sylvestre's face flushed understandingly. He opened his lips to reply, but hesitated, for suddenly the clatter of a madly ridden horse sounded behind them, and they drew up to wait. It was Patricia, of course.

The clatter came nearer and nearer. Mrs. Winthrop's eyes sparkled and her cheek flushed.

"Listen!" she cried. "Hear the girl ride! Oh, Bob, I wish I could ride like that!"

But Sylvestre was not envying nor admiring Patricia's riding. He was wondering what Cornelia meant when she said that Patricia had a secret. What could her secret be? Had somebody fallen in love with her? It was not impossible, for there were men—somewhere—who would not be repelled by the freedom of her speech. Perhaps some of the officers at Fort Logan. He remembered to have seen her dancing quite frequently with two lieutenants, Buckerman and Coatsworth he believed they were. But Patricia Marston married into the army? He fairly gasped at the idea. He ran over

the list of the bachelors at the Denver Club. It might be one of these. But would Cornelia call their falling in love with a girl "a good thing" for her? He thought not. His mind turned to the list of transients in Denver — always a long one and one which frequently bore honoured names. There was Lord Abernethy. He smiled involuntarily at the idea of his caring for Patricia. would be a catch. But Abernethy? idea! It might be Sir Wemyss Lombard. He was a sport and fond of — yes, by Jove! He was fond of polo! They were intent upon introducing the game to Denver, and that very morning were on their way to select a ground. Well, well! Sylvestre involuntarily straightened himself, being puffed up with vainglorious pride at having put two and two together and made one out of it. Cornelia Winthrop couldn't have done it better, he reflected.

He was so pleased with himself that he became benevolent to Patricia and felt inclined to look with different eyes upon her beauty.

CHAPTER IV

ABERNETHY AND MARSTON

was in all respects satisfactory. He carefully baited the Englishman, and negotiated between them until Abernethy was convinced that he had a wonderful bargain in his option on the trolley stock at \$150 per share, and G. W. frankly said that Cheroot was a wonder.

At a game where both parties were to be outwitted by a third and that third was Jimmie, he certainly was a "wonder."

Up to this point Jimmie had been an effectual go-between and G. W. had not met Lord Abernethy. But the time came when a meeting was inevitable and Jimmie could no longer keep them apart. He was a little anxious, as was only pardonable, that no private conversation should take place between them, as it might prove a trifle embar-

rassing if they should learn that he was taking a commission from both. Jimmy was sensitive about things of that sort.

But Marston was not anxious for a close acquaintance with the noble English lord, for he despised, as only a rough Westerner can, the rings on Abernethy's hands, his monocle, and above all his bracelet-watch. No red rag was ever so irritating to a bull as that bit of leather was to Marston. His fingers curled involuntarily whenever he thought of it. He wondered if he would be able to hold himself in when they met.

Fitzhugh St. John Goddard, Lord Abernethy, only son of the Duke of Strowther and brother of the famous beauty, Lady Mary Goddard, was of the slender, fair, blue-eyed type, with narrow shoulders and an incipient cough. Having been wounded in South Africa and being curious of temper, he naturally came to America and to the high altitude of the Rockies.

He came intending to lead an idle life as far as work was concerned, but strenuous as to play. But no sooner was it learned that he was in the vicinity of mines, railroads, and other colossal ways of making money, than several of his father's friends, with more money than judgment, wrote him to keep his weather eye open for investments, "preferably mining," they said.

"Preferably mining!"

It would seem almost a pity for even an honest man to let slip an opportunity to annex money which was so easy as that. But with the Denver business market in the state it was then, one need not worry for fear Abernethy's English friends would not be accommodated with opportunities to invest, for no sooner had the indiscreet young man casually mentioned that he had been so instructed, than the vultures which infest the town for the express purpose of robbing the unwary by foolish investments of wise capital, circled around him and roosted, so to speak, in every dead tree near which he halted.

Had his friends in England only known this phase of Denver life, it would have been wiser if they had frankly cabled him, "If you see any gold bricks, buy them for us."

But Abernethy had all of an Englishman's good opinion of himself and his capacity for knowing what's what, and if any one had warned him, he would have felt offended. He was stubborn in spite of his gentle speech and opinionated in spite of his courteous manner. He never thrust his views upon any one, but if you asked for them, you got them straight, no matter whose feelings were hurt. You could drive him into a corner, but you could not make him surrender.

He had no tact and he was ignorant of the small prejudices of American men. He had been brought up as an English gentleman, and he never knew how certain small so-called affectations of this up-bringing could sting those who were unfamiliar with them. He had never had occasion to realize that the hide of an American man in business may be as thick as that of a pachyderm, while in things social a gnat-bite would raise a poisoned white welt.

It was only natural that Abernethy should fall a victim to the dazzling glories of the Marston trolley scheme, as set forth by Cheroot, and when G. W. was told the result of the negotiations, he licked his jaws preparatory to making one bite of Abernethy and his trusting English friends.

An informal meeting of those interested had been called for three o'clock in the afternoon at the Marston Bank, and promptly at the hour the men began to file in.

Bunce came first, being anxious to look the ground over and see if he saw any signs of the Marston method. Bunce was important to G. W., for Bunce had a brother who was president of a bank in Omaha, and another in New York. It would never do to offend Bunce. Therefore G. W. received him with cordiality and offered him a cigar.

Next Crossfuylen, the cashier, and Jed Brown entered. Crossfuylen had a waist like a girl, delicate lungs, a furtive manner, and light green eyes.

Sir Wemyss Lombard followed these two. Marston liked Sir Wemyss. He was big, red-faced, near-sighted, and silent. He blushed if spoken to suddenly, but no one who looked long into those choleric blue eyes of his would care to offend him.

In addition to these qualities, he could drink a quart of Scotch whiskey between ten o'clock at night and bedtime and walk up-stairs without touching the banisters. This inspired Denver men with absolute awe. When G. W. saw him do it, he at once offered to take him into the company, and as Sir Wemyss had no money, G. W. promptly "staked" him, Sir Wemyss putting up some perfectly worthless shares in an East Indian company against shares in the Denver trolley. This was done in a game of poker in which they each played for stock and G. W. promptly lost purposely to Sir Wemyss—a not unheard-of act if you knew the other side of the man. No one could say that G. W. was not appreciative of merit whenever and wherever he found it.

When Lord Abernethy entered, G. W. glanced involuntarily at his bracelet-watch, and when he saw it, a look of disgust spread over his features.

No two men could have been more unlike than Abernethy and Marston.

Marston's was of the bulldog variety of countenance. His eyes were small and brown, with inflamed rims. His nose was small and smoothly bulbous, with tiny purplish veins showing against the red. It was embedded in his face, while his jaws were

loose-hung and closed with the snap of a steel trap. He was an exaggeration of the type of men who have made the West, while Abernethy's was that of an English type, overrefined, overcivilized, gone to seed.

The meeting was one called by Marston for the double purpose of entering into the agreement with Abernethy to give to him a sixty-day option on the trolley stock for the English syndicate, and to show to Tappen and Wright, the city fathers, that he was really going to do as he had promised them.

Whenever Marston spoke he kept his eye on Abernethy, but did not observe that the small, piercing eyes, the colour of Delft china, of Lombard were fixed closely upon his own person. Sir Wemyss, fumbling with his watch-guard, and his general bungling manner completely threw the American off his guard. "A damned good fellow, but somewhat of an ass—as most Englishmen are," was Marston's description of Sir Wemyss. But the glorious scheme had entered the American's mind of securing Sir Wemyss for a son-in-law. He leaned back in his chair in deep contemplation, ending by

a grave shake of the head, every time he thought of that quart of Scotch whiskey.

Meantime Sir Wemyss had his suspicion of that poker game, and he had all of an honest man's suspicion of a proposition to give something for nothing. So, while he was too wise to refuse to sit in the game, he saw no harm in watching the shuffling of the cards and the movements of the dealer.

Timmie Cheroot and Abernethy represented the purchasing syndicate.

Things went smoothly in the meeting until it developed that the purchasing price was at \$150 per share. Then Jed Brown's eyes met those of G. W., for G. W. had during the past ten days taken up his option on Jed's stock at \$125, and although legally the action could not be questioned, Jed recognized the Marston method in it, and he then and there made up his mind to get even with G. W. He glanced piercingly at Jimmie Cheroot, but such innocence beamed from the dapper little blond that Jed passed on to the next. Suddenly, as he saw the shifting, uneasy demeanour of Tappen and Wright, he made a mental note of them. He also determined to look up Sylvestre,

because he heard that Sylvestre had gone to New York to offer his survey of the pass over the mountains to Lucius Bunce of New York, the man who was ostensibly promoting the railroad.

But notwithstanding Jed's indifference to the proceedings, the option was made over to the syndicate, represented by Lord Abernethy, for \$150 per share, for sixty days.

Abernethy fumbled with his gold cigarette-case for a moment, then said, absent-mindedly:

"With your permission, gentlemen," and then took out a cigarette.

Unfortunately the watch-bracelet came plainly into view.

Instantly, as if having waited for an opening, Marston said:

"I suppose you didn't notice that the rest of us are smoking!"

Lord Abernethy's han'd trembled almost imperceptibly as he replied:

"Pardon me, Mr. Marston, but I have had no occasion to notice that the rest of you were smoking."

The American gripped the arms of his chair convulsively for a moment, but his

Western idea of hospitality overrode his anger at the reproof, and with an effort he said:

"I beg your pardon, Abernethy, I did not notice that cigars had not been passed to you. Crossfuylen, damn it, am I to tell you every time a gentleman comes in, to offer him cigars?"

Crossfuylen coloured angrily as he hastened to repair his omission. He had been writing when his chief spoke, and as he rose to obey he thrust his pen behind his ear, with the habit of his clerkly days, and as he proffered the cigars to the Englishman, the pen dropped, leaving a large splash of ink on Abernethy's shirt cuff.

Marston hated accidents and awkwardness. He glared upon his unfortunate henchman.

"See what you have done!" he growled. "Well, Abernethy, I am sorry, but it's a good thing it wasn't on the bosom, or you'd have to change your whole shirt. Now all you will have to do is to turn your cuffs."

"Turn my cuffs?" repeated the Englishman, uncomprehendingly. "How do you mean?"

"Reverse them! Turn them end for end," said Marston, pulling up his coat sleeve and exhibiting a surgical sort of thing which held his own in place, beneath which his red flannel undershirt could be plainly seen.

Abernethy leaned forward to look.

"Aren't your cuffs sewed to your shirt?" he asked, in genuine surprise. "Can you change one without the other?"

"Now listen to him!" derided the Westerner. "Don't you wear detached cuffs?"

Abernethy coloured, but he realized that Marston was honest.

- "No, I don't," he said. "I never saw any before."
- "Why, don't they wear them in England? Why, it's a Yankee trick to save time and trouble."
- "And washing, I should say," said Abernethy.
- "You bet! And washing! Honest, now, didn't you ever hear of them?"
- "Yes, I think I have. I think my man wears them, because I've had occasion to reprove him for forgetting them once or

twice, but I never saw — er — the process of reversing them, as you call it."

Marston was quite innocent of any cause for offence.

As the room cleared, G. W. went into his private office and beckoned to the cashier. Crossfuylen had never responded to his chief's command with more alacrity. Bitterness twofold rankled in his soul against Abernethy. First, he had refused Mrs. Crossfuylen's invitation to dinner with no excuse, and second, he had been the cause of his — Crossfuylen's — being sworn at in public by Marston. G. W. was too shrewd to let the public know how completely the cashier was dominated by the president. Crossfuylen was thin-skinned and rancorous. He determined to discover just how far G. W. intended to go with the Englishman, and, if possible, to add to the plan.

"We'll make it go, Crossfuylen," said Marston, rubbing his hands. "I shall hold off Tappen and Wright by explaining my plans — some of them — to-night."

Crossfuylen made a few rapid notes.

"By the way," said Crossfuylen, with a smile parting his thin, dry lips, "allow me to congratulate you on the way you controlled yourself when Lord Abernethy insulted you about wearing reversible cuffs. Said he believed his servant wore them — as much as to say a gentleman wouldn't — and right on top of your having showed him yours. But you took it beauti—"

"What!" roared Marston, with a red face, "was that what he meant? Hum! Hum! Your congratulations are a little previous, Crossfuylen. I don't deserve them. I don't know what I could have been thinking about not to have understood what he was driving at, but I don't mind telling you that I didn't see it at the time, at all! Damn me, if I did! What do you think I'd have done! But are you sure he meant that?"

"Oh, sure!" answered the cashier. "I saw him give Sir Wemyss a look when he said it."

"He meant it, did he? Well, that settles his hash! The moment his syndicate pays the money over for that trolley, I'll not only not hold Tappen and Wright back any longer, but I'll sick 'em on. They'll make them take up that conduit, and it'll ruin

them! It'll ruin Abernethy and ruin his company. Abernethy doesn't know that we'd have had to remove that conduit long ago if I did not control the city council. Well, he won't find it out for a little while longer, and then it will be too late. Said nobody but servants wore detached cuffs, did he? Well, he'll have to do more than reverse his cuffs when he comes to dig up that conduit! Eh, Crossfuylen?"

The cashier grinned silently, then gathered up his papers and went out to where Tappen and Wright were still nervously awaiting him.

"Mr. Marston will see you at his house to-night at eight," he said, significantly.

And it was Patricia who overheard that short, but pointed conference—the only conference which held the key to the whole of Marston's scheme—at the house that night. It only lasted a quarter of an hour, and was so innocent in character, viewed apart from its bearing upon the rest of the plan, that G. W. unconsciously raised his voice.

And Patricia heard it all.

CHAPTER V

PATRICIA MARSTON

FEW days after the scenes in the foregoing chapter, Cornelia was sitting in her room smiling to herself over a visit she had just received from Syl-In a way his visit had been dis-The New York people, while appointing. admitting that in all probability his was the most practicable route over the mountains to Agua, the town nearest Cornelia's property, had refused to buy his survey. Lucius Bunce even refused to look at it at first, until Sylvestre, in a burst of rage, intimated that, if the scheme were not a gigantic fake, he would be glad at least to examine it, the result of two summers' work. At that Bunce consented to look into it.

Cornelia did not attach any importance to this point. She argued that the thousands of dollars spent in advertising in every paper from Maine to California could not possibly be wasted by any sane man. If the scheme to mislead the public could have been done cheaply, she might have believed it, but not at such great cost.

She lost herself pleasantly in a dream of how she could spend the income from the sum she could not fail to realize from the sale of her property to the railway company, and she felt infinitely wise and masculine and commercial to think that she was going to act as so few women would, in selling for a moderate sum in cash, rather than wait to develop a gold mine which would take years and millions to realize on.

Sylvestre had declared that the road must run through Agua, and she believed Bob implicitly on a matter of business, but when he invaded her realm and hazarded a guess that it was Sir Wemyss Lombard who had captivated Patricia Marston —

A sudden sharp knock at the door made her start. She had not time to answer it before the door opened and Patricia Marston, flushed, nervous, incoherent, rushed into her presence.

Patricia was beautifully gowned in gray

velvet and chinchilla—a suggestion from Cornelia herself. But at the first glance Cornelia knew that something was vitally wrong with Patricia, for never before had her appearance been so nearly distraught.

"Well, my dear," said Cornelia, tentatively.

Patricia got up and walked to the window. She held her muff to her lips and gazed over its gray fluff at the range of distant mountains, with the outline of the Holy Cross distinct before her eyes.

"I've got to tell you, but it's awful work," she murmured, indistinctly.

"Put your muff down and talk so that I can hear you," said Cornelia. "May I give you a cup of tea?"

"A cup of tea!" cried Patricia, explosively. "I can't be bothered with tea today! Oh, excuse me! But if you knew—but how am I going to begin without being absolutely brazen?"

Cornelia saw that something serious was the matter, and forebore to disturb her.

"If I had a mother —" began Patricia. Then seeing Mrs. Winthrop's 'ook of surprise, she added, "I mean one that was any

good - I'd go to her, but mother is probably reading a novel by the Duchess, and wouldn't care to be annoyed."

The girl spoke bitterly, but the nervous eagerness of her manner only increased.

"If you can tell me —" began Cornelia.

"I've got to! I'm simply driven to it. There's no other way!" said Patricia. "If you hate me afterward, I can't help it. you are horrified at my disclosures, I shall lose your friendship. But, oh, God! what am I to do?"

Her voice broke into a wail and she flung herself on to the couch, her whole frame shaking with tearless, convulsive sobs.

Instantly, even if she had been lukewarm before, Cornelia Winthrop became heart and soul the friend of this untamed creature of the Rockies, for suffering roused all the maternal instinct in her, which had been thwarted all her brief but brilliant married life.

"Patricia," she said, gently, "tell me everything. I'll stand by you."

Those words, although unlike Cornelia's usually carefully selected sentences, were just the tonic which Patricia needed. She sat up and looked the Eastern woman squarely in the eye. She made no further apology nor explanation. It was her way to be direct and fearless after once committing herself to a line of action.

"I have discovered a vile plot against Lord Abernethy," she began, colouring divinely at the mention of his name, "and it will shock you more than it does me to know that my father is at the bottom of it, for I've never had any confidence in my father's business methods, since I found out about one of his deals and taxed him with it. When I discovered this and asked him about it, he admitted it, didn't seem to know that it was dishonourable, didn't care when I told him, and refused to pull out when I begged him, so it's up to me now to beat him at his own game. I can't call him off. He wouldn't listen."

Although Cornelia carefully concealed any horror she might feel at Patricia's words, the girl herself seemed instinctively to realize that she must explain. Her brilliant sense of humour came to her rescue and saved her from becoming tragic. She gave a little wintry smile.

"Father himself once gave the best explanation of business here in Denver that I ever heard. An old friend of his came out here and father met him on the street. 'Have you come for your health?' he asked. 'No,' the man answered. 'Marston, I have come to Denver to try and make an honest living.' 'Well,' said father, 'you have struck the only line in Denver in which you will have no competition!'"

Her pale face twitched a moment with appreciation, then she continued:

"Lord Abernethy's syndicate is about to buy the Denver trolley system. He told me so. He mentioned it when he was saying how much he liked me—oh, I never would have dared to tell you if I hadn't heard enough to make me think he cares! For I care so much! I care enough to ruin my father to save him! Is that wicked? I don't know. I don't know right from wrong as other people see it. I only know that I never see but one road ahead, and that's the road I travel on. It never forks for me. It leads straight, and all that rot about a daughter's duty to her father may go to

the devil for all of me, if my father is bent on ruining and disgracing an honest man!"

- "But would you," asked Cornelia, "if you didn't love the man?"
- "No," she said, decidedly. "I wouldn't bother. I'm not here to reform twentieth century business methods. Let other people take care of themselves. I am here with you to-day to protect Abernethy. Tell me one thing you know the world. He hasn't proposed to me. He has only said he cared. He wouldn't deceive me, would he, just for the fun of it?"
- "Indeed he would not!" said Cornelia, earnestly, striving to allay the baleful light which for a moment blazed from Patricia's eyes.
- "Because I'd kill him, if he did," said the girl in gray velvet, simply.

Cornelia's conventional self gasped. Then her pagan self — that side of her which had impelled her to come West — asserted itself, and her soul linked itself to Patricia's. At that moment, she felt that she approved of Patricia. Nay, she would even help, if help were needed.

"Night before last two men called on

Their names are Tappen and father. They are councilmen, and father Wright. owns them body and soul, but it is near election time and they must do certain Now, public opinion demands that the underground conduit, which should have been taken up when the cable was made into a trolley, but which father refused to do, must be taken up now. It will be ruinously expensive, so father wants to sell the trolley first, and then let the city council do as it Of course he would just as soon pleases. sell his stock, but of course nobody will buy, because everybody here knows what must be done. He controls the newspapers, so you never hear anything about it. Abernethy's only chance is to have somebody tell him about it, but so few know that he is the purchaser, and those who know are all stockholders and as anxious to sell as father is."

"Tell him yourself," cried Cornelia.

"I couldn't," said Patricia. "I simply couldn't. I thought of that. I have thought of everything. But it would look so brazen - so immodest - I thought perhaps you could suggest something - "

She broke off suddenly, for Cornelia had risen abruptly and walked to the window. She saw her own ruined prospects stare her in the face. She began to piece bits of information together. Sylvestre had told her that the trolley was to be used as part of the new railroad which was to run through her She had never heard of the property. abandoned conduit, nor had Bob. were new people in Denver. So was Abernethy. And the newspapers were occupied with fresher news. If the railroad did not succeed in obtaining a right of way through Denver, it would not run to Agua. Abernethy were not warned, the English syndicate would buy the trolley, and resell it to the railroad. But Patricia's marriage would never take place. Abernethy would never marry the daughter of the man who had disgraced him in the eyes of his peers.

It cut like a knife, in the face of her bitter disappointment, — at what she thought would delay, if not postpone altogether, the sale of her mine, — to be obliged to face the situation and decide to help Patricia. For a moment she almost hated the girl for bringing the information to her. She hated

her self for taking Patricia up. Bob warned her not to. This was the result. But that would not aid nor hinder the fraud of the trolley scheme. Patricia moved uneasily in her chair, and Cornelia turned to look at her. The girl's wide eyes held a look of appeal, yet in their depths was an expression of fearlessness and a bravery which brought Cornelia back to her better self. Patricia rose to her feet, uncertain how to translate Cornelia's silence. She stood so alone, practically motherless and fatherless, yet with her instinct for the true and right, and with those eyes!

Cornelia decided. But her decision drew blood. She forgot to take any intermediate steps.

"I have decided how to bring you out," she began, too full of her own sacrifice to choose her words.

Patricia started.

"Into society?" she asked, in astonishment.

"Yes," answered Cornelia.

Patricia walked toward the door.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Winthrop," she said, with flashing eyes. "I came to ask your

help in a matter which means life or death to me. I trusted you with my secret. And you talk to me about my début into society!"

"Patricia!" cried Cornelia. "Don't fly off in that manner! Listen to me. It is part of my plan."

But the shock to Patricia's nerves had been too great. She stood, with her hand on the knob, looking doubtfully at her friend.

"This is my plan for warning Lord Abernethy. You know that Mrs. Lowe's bazar in aid of the hospital has almost been abandoned. It was to have been held at the governor's house, but Governor Coolidge's illness has put an end to everything. They have been working six months on it, but not a house in town is large enough except yours. Strangely enough, your house was not even mentioned in canvassing possibilities. It is thrown open so seldom, I suppose they never thought of it."

Patricia coloured hotly. She well knew that was not the reason Mrs. Lowe had not suggested it. The Marstons were not considered at all — in any capacity — unless for subscriptions! She wondered if even Mrs.

Winthrop's influence were strong enough to secure an acceptance of it, if she should offer it. But her faith in Cornelia's influence was great.

"Perhaps your mother may object," Cornelia went on, "but you must persuade her to do it. Then you must slip away from the flower-table, which I had planned to get for you, and disguise yourself as a gipsy fortune-teller. I will see to it that Abernethy goes to you to have his palm read, and you can then warn him about the abandoned conduit."

Patricia was only a woman, and her head swam with the brilliance and magnitude of the plan. She knew that she could manage her mother. And to think of having Mrs. Lowe, Mrs. De Lancy, Mrs. O'Toole, and Mrs. Charnley, the leaders of Denver society, familiarly in her house, discussing things, driving up informally mornings, telephoning her — in short, that she was at one bound to be one of them — thrilled her quite as delightfully as the fact that at the same time she would rescue her lover from danger and disgrace. Patricia was only human, and she was young. A tremendous capacity for heroism

was closely interwoven with a truly feminine vanity. It made her very nice to know.

"Is that as good a way to get into society as a ball, or something of that kind?" asked Patricia, with an idea buzzing in her mind worthy of G. W. himself.

"Much better," answered Cornelia.

"There is nothing like charity for covering a multitude of sins!"

Cornelia had only intended to be witty, but she was appalled at the look which crossed Patricia's face. Too well the Western girl understood the neglect with which her mother had been treated. In this case, however, she intended to make assurance doubly sure.

"The hospital looks lopsided with only one wing. Why don't they build the other?"

"They haven't the money. It is their cherished plan, however, to build it sometime. This bazar is to furnish what they have already built."

"Would it make a person very popular to build that other wing, now?" asked Patricia.

Cornelia looked at her. Then she leaned forward and touched Patricia's knee.

"Do you mean that? Patricia Marston! Could you manage to do that?"

"Certainly I could."

There was a little justifiable pride in her voice. Involuntarily she bit her lip and ran her finger under the edge of her veil. After all, it was not so bad to have nothing but money. It made even Mrs. Winthrop sit up to know Patricia's power in that direction. Patricia cleared her throat in a pleased way and smoothed her muff complacently.

"That will make the whole thing more than simple. It will make it easy. I will call on Mrs. Lowe to-day."

Patricia rose to go.

"Will your mother consent to have the bazar?" asked Cornelia.

"You may have the house at any time you choose," Patricia replied.

It was the American girl's answer.

CHAPTER VI

HOW PATRICIA PREPARED FOR HER PART

ENVER experienced something of a shock when it was learned that the Marston house was to be the scene of Mrs. Lowe's fair for the hospital. But as excitement of any sort is welcome in Denver (owing to the altitude), and as Mrs. Lowe and her three sisters represented the strongest social element in town, it soon came to be taken as a matter of course.

No little enthusiasm, however, grew in the minds of the promoters of the bazar, when they saw what a magician Patricia proved. Conveniences arose as if by magic. Servants were in profusion. Her carriages and horses were at the disposal of the committee day and night. Electricians wired and rewired the house and grounds and conservatories. Car-loads of flowers were ordered. Such profusion and magnificence were unknown.

Meantime, although the time was short, three persons had not been idle. Patricia herself, Cornelia, and Jed Brown were all working for the same end, the two women ignorant of their man ally. Patricia and Cornelia were gathering all the information possible for Patricia's part as fortune-teller. Jed Brown was groping for a plan to ruin G. W.

Patricia's instinct somehow told her to question Mrs. Jimmie Cheroot, and she came out from her interview with flames of colour in her cheeks. Sundry adroit questionings secured from her father sufficient information to cause her to clap her hands with delight. A few more such successes and she would have the threads of destiny in her hands for half the people in Denver. She checked the names off on her fingers. Cornelia must see to it that Jed Brown, Jimmie Cheroot, and Abernethy must come to her booth to have their palms read.

During all this time G. W., too, was in his element. He began to think that moving in the best society was more exciting than making money. It flattered his vanity to be consulted by such women as Mrs. Lowe and her sisters. He gave Patricia her cheque to build a wing to the hospital with a twinkle of delight in his eye.

"Patrichy's the stuff," he said to himself over and over as he viewed the disorder and chaos of his house.

"Trust that girl of mine to get what she wants," and he let his mind wander happily to the time when the Englishman who could stand up under a quart of whiskey should be safely shelved as Patricia's husband and his son-in-law.

The younger set were not slow to see in Patricia a new and valuable addition to their circle. They viewed her possibilities in a flash and opened their arms. The girl accepted their advances with proud humility, but saw to it that she gave them value received for whatever they did for her.

Every morning now, she, too, was included in the little group which made a daily showing at Showalter's drug store on Sixteenth Street, where the soda-water was the best, and where, around its marble

counters, it was the fashion to congregate. Everybody, in passing, looked in at Showalter's to see who was there. It was like the market in Washington. One held little receptions there, and the sayings of the negro Charlie, who drew the soda-water, were not least of the attractions. To one who said:

"Well, Showalter's is getting to be a regular rendezvous," Charlie said, in indignant remonstrance:

"Dat's right! Mek use ob a place en den call it names!"

But much as Patricia enjoyed what these hurried days brought her, the real interest in her life lay in the part she intended to play as fortune-teller. After it was all over, several thought she must possess second sight or have a gift for mind-reading, but they little knew what a clever woman, whose lover was in danger, could do, when she had pitted herself against men who were unsuspicious and susceptible to the flattery of a pretty girl. As an example, it will be seen how easy it was for her to gain material, when she discovered from an idle boast of her father's that he had neatly

"done" Jed Brown out of thousands by taking up his option on Jed's stock at \$125, when he had a purchaser in Abernethy at \$150. Patricia's quick mind flew at once to the conclusion that Jed's desire for revenge might be useful to her.

But the day before the bazar was to open, Sylvestre nearly upset the whole affair by mentioning to Patricia that the new railroad was to run through Cornelia's property and make her rich.

It was fortunate that Sylvestre was a trifle stupid regarding women, as has been indicated, otherwise he would have seen how white Patricia grew and how suddenly she sank into a chair.

"What makes you think so?" she asked.

"Oh, it's bound to. I only mentioned it to you because you like her so much. I knew you would be glad. It isn't in you to be envious."

But Patricia did not even hear the compliment—the first he had ever paid her. Her mind flew back to the day of her interview with Cornelia when she asked her to help her warn Abernethy. Patricia saw it all. She realized the shock which must

have come to Cornelia when she saw that her hopes had been built on sand, and the girl's heart suddenly overflowed in passionate gratitude to the woman who had so nobly put her own disappointment in the background, and had at once flung herself into a plan to aid Patricia and Abernethy.

Patricia leaned her head on her arm for a moment.

- "Tired?" asked Sylvestre.
- "Verv!"
- "Better have a cup of tea," said Syl-"There's nothing which sets my vestre. mother up like a cup of - "
- "I thought Mrs. Winthrop's property was a gold mine," interrupted Patricia.
- "It is, and the biggest one in the State. It's too big for her to handle. It is absolutely what is called a rich man's mine, so, while in ten or fifteen years she might find people to take it up, the railroad will pay a good round sum in cash and stock to her now, and she is just sensible enough to see it."
- "But the railroad." insisted Patricia. "What makes you think it will run through her property?"

"It's got to — if it goes at all," answered Sylvestre. "I have spent two summers making an exhaustive survey of the route. Last week I took it to New York and left it with the promoters."

"Did they examine it? Did they accept it?" asked Patricia, eagerly.

Sylvestre looked at her with suspicion.

"Excuse me for asking. But I am so interested — for — for Cornelia's sake," said Patricia.

"Oh, I see! Well, they wouldn't look at it at first. In fact, although I brought a letter from one of his best friends, old Bunce — Lucius, I mean, the New York one — wouldn't even see me. But I insisted, and when I saw him he wouldn't even look at my survey — said they had their own engineers. That made me pretty hot, so I told him that — what was it I said? Oh, that unless the whole thing was a fake, he ought to give me a chance."

"You said that to Lucius Bunce?" cried Patricia.

"I did just that! Nervy, wasn't it? But my fighting blood was up. He gave me a sharp look, but took my papers and

blue-prints, and said it should have his personal attention and that I should hear from him."

- "Have you heard?" asked Patricia.
- "Not vet. I haven't had time. But I know that he will be obliged to take my plans, for it includes Jed Brown's road ten miles only, to be sure, but still ten miles of good road is not to be ignored."
- "Does Mr. Brown know that your survey includes his road?" asked Patricia.
- "Oh, yes. I told him, of course. just laughed and said the railroad would come after him quickly enough if they wanted it."

Patricia got up and walked around aimlessly for awhile. They were in the conservatory, and servants were serving tea for the tired committee, who flitted in and out without paying much attention to the two who were talking so quietly behind the palms.

Suddenly Patricia came close to Sylves-She held a fold of a heavy curtain she was measuring nervously in her hand, and she spoke excitedly.

"What do you know of mines? Is Cor-

nelia's really a valuable one? You know I don't give that for the best mining proposition on earth!"

"But your father has made millions in them," said Sylvestre.

"Yes, but never until somebody else had prospected. Dad never risked a penny on a theory. He has men on the lookout all the time for a good thing in the hands of poor men. Then when they need more money, father advances it to them and takes stock as security. Soon they get to a tight place, or discouraged or something, when father very reluctantly takes over the mine, works it, and gets, for almost nothing, all their toil and hardship and experience. That's how father mines! Oh, I know him!"

"Well, Cornelia's has been opened up, and twenty, perhaps thirty or forty, thousand dollars sunk in it already. I've been over the ground carefully and know what is there, but it is too far away; there is no railroad nearer than Jed's, which heads toward Agua, and the veins are deep and inaccessible to all but the most expensive machinery. If I could only have got hold of Abernethy before he tied himself up

with the trolley - of course you won't agree with me there, for your father will sell his property instead of Mrs. Winthrop and myself! - but I only learned a day or two ago that his syndicate instructed him to buy mining property if possible, and only yielded their consent to the trolley on his representations of the quick turn he could make with the railroad. But it's no good crying over spilled milk. I sha'n't see such a chance as that again for ten years. Why, whatever is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing," cried Patricia, "but I do think that you and Mrs. Winthrop are the very best friends I ever had. I hope that some day I can make you both as happy as vou have made me!"

As she flew out of the room Sylvestre looked after her thoughtfully.

"She's more like a cyclone than a She's a nice little thing, but I woman. wouldn't live in the same house with her for a fortune. She lacks continuity."

CHAPTER VII

THE FORTUNE - TELLER'S BOOTH

N the night of the bazar, all Denver made it a point to go. Some went because they were friends of Mrs. Lowe and her committee; others because they wanted to see the Marstons' house; others because there was nothing else in town to go to. A few went because they were interested in the hospital. Fortunately an admittance fee was charged, so that the hospital profited by all these motives.

As is usual with bazars, some old feuds were healed and some new jealousies begun. Charity is a large word. It excuses everything. Women do things under its broad name which no other power could excuse them for doing. They make concessions or go to extremes, always protected by its elastic mantle. It seems to be a cap-

ital way for compressed natures to let off steam.

But no one could deny that this bazar was a success. Marston had cause to be proud of himself. He strolled through the brilliantly lighted rooms, heavy with the fragrance of costly flowers and murmuring with the silken rustle of women's robes, self-satisfied and complacent as he never had been before. Only once was his serenity disturbed. His hands were behind his back and his head thrust forward on his chest, when on a long rug which lay through a narrow corridor he met Jed Brown walking in the same manner, with his hands behind him and his chin resting on his shirt-front.

Both men looked at each other and involuntarily backed off the rug as if they had stepped on a snake. They walked around it with their little red eyes on each other like two bulldogs. Neither spoke. For the first time a dirty trick had caused a coolness between them. Marston vaguely wondered why. He had played so many other and dirtier tricks on Jed Brown without his getting mad, it seemed queer to see the old man angry at this one.

In the flower booth, radiant in pink silk, with a string of pearls around her neck, with her shining hair piled high on her head and pushed forward in the prevailing fashion, Patricia sold blossoms at fabulous prices. She was becoming undeniably popular. She was being approved of by her small world, and the success of it flushed her cheeks and shone starry in her eyes. Cornelia, brilliant in dead black, which set off the radiance of her glorious red hair, occasionally approached and whispered some private information about some one into Patricia's ear.

Then when the flowers were all sold out, as care had been taken that they should be early, Patricia mingled with the crowd for half an hour and suddenly disappeared.

Soon afterward a gipsy hag, with black hair braided in small braids tightly all over her head, with swarthy skin and darkened teeth, clad in red calico, with coins in her ears and dangling from her breast and in her hair, with her slim brown hands covered with curious cheap silver rings, squatted on a divan between two heavy red curtains, while dull blue flames from antique lamps threw a weird light upon her, distorting her features and adding mystery to the scene.

Gently rocking herself to and fro, she shuffled and dealt the cards, not even raising her eyes when the curious parted the curtains and paused to gaze upon her. She sang softly to herself a wild, unrhythmic song with wholly unintelligible words.

A young man entered and asked her to tell his fortune. He was impertinent and inclined to take liberties. The gipsy told his fortune, and he left her booth, pale and trembling, nor would he tell what she had said.

A school friend came next, a girl who had done Patricia a great wrong. The gipsy told her fortune and the girl left the booth in tears.

Others followed. Some were pleased and laughed, albeit somewhat nervously. Others were plainly frightened.

Suddenly, to Patricia's horror, her father entered.

"What fool nonsense is this? My good

woman, this is a private house. Don't you know I can't have a professional here? Come, you must go away. You are frightening people with your lies!"

"If I tell you true, may I stay? I no tell you lies. Show me your hand!"

"I'll not show you my hand. Yours are dirty. You may be bringing contagion into my house. Be off with you."

For reply Patricia gazed at him strangely, and an expression of horror grew on her face.

"Danger!" she whispered. danger is on your head. I see it in the air. You must be warned. Perhaps I can save you!"

The old man wavered for a moment, but she seized his hand and looked at it intently. "Go away!" she said, pushing it from her. "You are in wild danger. Enemies are on your trail, but it is written that there

is no escape. Go. I can tell you no more. Yours is a bad hand."

"What's the matter with my hand?" asked G. W., with some show of nervousness.

"It has done evil deeds. But the end is near. Vengeance is on the way."

"What do you mean, you hag?" spite of himself G. W. was superstitious. and he was too much of a gambler by nature not to believe in omens. "Tell me what you see, but if you lie to me, I'll throw you out of the house with those same bad hands of mine."

Patricia grinned, disclosing darkened teeth.

" Pav." she said.

G. W. handed her a silver dollar. She flung it back at him.

"Pay five of those — ten for what I have to say!" she said, contemptuously.

"Well, you've got your nerve with you!" he said. "You make me pay ten dollars to hear bad news. And in my own house, too!"

"This your house?" said the gipsy, eagerly, as she took the money. "It will not be yours long. You will lose it. You will lose your money. You will lose your friends. There are two tracks - shining tracks of steel - which are leading you down, down to destruction. A great gulf lies at the end. You have planned to push others down this track. It is written that you finish there yourself instead."

The gipsy paused. G. W.'s face was beaded in sweat. To tell the truth, although everything looked safe, he never had felt sure that this deal would go through. Never before had he possessed so little power over the right men. Never had he been so nearly in the power of those who could ruin him by a false move.

"Do you see any more?" he asked, hoarsely.

"Yes; two men. One light, with blue eyes and red in his cheeks. He is not of this land. The other, heavier, darker, older, your bitter enemy. They stand on the bank and watch you sinking into the black water. They laugh, for it is what you planned for them!"

"Jed and Abernethy!" burst unconsciously from G. W.'s pale lips.

He made an effort to pull himself together. He did not wholly believe in the gipsy, yet her prophecy was disquieting.

"Is there no way out?" he demanded.

Patricia consulted the cards. Marston watched her impatiently.

"Stop that damned fooling!" he cried. "You don't see anything in a pack of cards. You get it somewhere else. Look in my hand — look over my head. Tell me what you see."

But Patricia was at her wit's end. She took refuge in sullenness.

"You no believe in my cards. My eyes grow blind to you. I see no more. Go away."

"I'm sorry — I didn't mean it," said Marston. "If I come back again — if I pay you well, will you try again?"

"Perhaps," said Patricia. "Come again in two hours. Perhaps the light will shine again. In two hours."

Marston went out and made her famous. He told everybody that she told the damnedest things he ever heard in his life. The curious, easily excited (on account of the altitude) flocked to the fortune-teller's booth. Marston accidentally made quite a sum of money for the hospital.

In the meantime Cornelia had not been

idle. She adroitly steered those Patricia wanted to see toward the gipsy booth.

Jimmie Cheroot went in, and came out clenching and unclenching his hands. The gipsy told him that he had tried to take money from those who sold and from those who bought, and that he would make from neither.

"It's all rot!" he said to himself, fiercely. He did not believe in her. Nevertheless. he went into the smoking-room and smoked violently for an hour. Then he resolved on a desperate move. He hunted up led Brown.

"Say, Jed, you are feeling pretty sore about G. W.'s taking up his option on your stock, aren't you?"

"Should say I was," growled "Damned, dirty, low, Irish trick. just like G. W. He got that option of me when the trolley stock was only seventytwo. One twenty-five looked like the millennium then. Well, what about it? What are you grinning like a sick cat for?"

"Nothing. Only there's a gipsy—a professional - up-stairs who as good as told me that the trolley deal was not going through. I thought maybe you would like to try your luck and see if she tells you anything."

- "A gipsy? Oh, hell! I don't believe in 'em."
 - "All right."
- "Hold on! Where is she and what does she charge?"
- "She charges five dollars. Come along. I'll show you."

He led the way, and Jed went in and showed his palm.

"There is some one you trust without who listens. He is not true to you. Look quickly!" whispered Patricia.

Jed jumped to the door, and in doing so nearly knocked Jimmie Cheroot down.

"Get out, Jimmie. Don't listen. She was on to you."

The old man came back, smiling and walking as usual with one hand in his trousers pocket.

- "It's all right. He didn't mean any He only wanted to hear what you said to me for fun," he said.
 - "He wanted to hear what I said to you

for evil," crooned the gipsy. "Beware of him!"

"Nonsense!" said Brown.

"No!" cried the gipsy, in sudden, Romany anger. She lifted her hand and pointed her finger menacingly. "Not nonsense! The gipsy sees true. His hand is there, as yours is, in your pocket."

Jed stared in a bewildered way at his pocket.

"His hand is there, in your pocket!" she repeated. "And in the air above your head I see in figures of fire one and two and five. You have lost money by him with one twenty-five. Ah, ha! You start! The gipsy knows! The gipsy sees! The gipsy tells!"

Jed gnawed his fingers furiously.

"It would be just like the little devil," he muttered.

"See!" cried the gipsy. "I have a great fortune for you. It is worth much more than five of those beautiful silver pieces. It is worth ten — twenty — one hundred!"

"You won't get another cent!" growled Jed.

"But see," wheedled the gipsy. "If I

read revenge in your heart, and show you how to get vengeance on the old man who has robbed you by aid of the young man, will you give me more?"

Jed snorted with passion.

"Yes!" he shouted. "Show me how and I'll give you this!"

He dragged a thick roll of bills from his pocket, and the gipsy's eyes gleamed to see the figures on the outside bill.

Truly Patricia knew the gipsy nature.

She shuffled the cards, but her breath came short. She was tremendously excited.

"Money!" she muttered.

"For me?" asked Jed.

The hag nodded and all her coins jingled. The lamps burned blue, and the old man watched her feverishly.

"Treachery from a friend—an old man," she said. "You have been good to him, but he repays it not. He robs you for his own gain, but the stars say no. His plan goes wrong. There is a tall man of another nation, with a strap of leather on his wrist. It tells him the hour. In two days from now he expects to pay the money of his friends to the old man, your enemy.

But at the last moment something happens. He does not buy. I see you and him together and between you much, much money. You go to him and he gives you vengeance."

She paused and looked at him.

"Do you understand?"

Ied nodded. He was beyond speech.

The gipsy peered at him.

"You do not understand!" she cried. "Ask me questions. I will answer."

"I understand some of it. But how does Aber— the man with the leather strap on his wrist give me vengeance?"

The gipsy shook her head and shuffled the cards again.

"There is a woman with red hair. There is a tall, dark man. They do not live here. They come from far to sell to sell gold, but the gold is in the ground. The man with the leather strap on his wrist buys. He comes to you and says, 'Carry my gold for me on your steel rails. I do not buy of the other old man. I buy of you and her and him."

"By Jove! By the Lord Harry! Here, woman! You may be the damnedest liar on the top of God's footstool, but you've given me an idea which will make me millions. Here, take the money, you've earned it. Lemme out of here."

"Wait!" cried the gipsy. "You must dream three nights over what I have told. If you speak to-night it will not come true."

"Three nights!" stammered Jed. "Gee! I can scarcely wait to get hold of my man."

"Three nights must you dream over it, with this charm held in your hand while you fall asleep." She detached a coin from her neck. "In the morning mark well where the coin lies, for so will your plans go—now up, now down, but always, if you obey me, will they come true!"

The old man was furiously impatient, but Patricia knew enough of the gambler's nature, the superstitious side of those who deal in stocks and all ventures which depend upon fluctuations of the market, to know that even sailors are not more dependent on signs of good and bad luck. Her father never rode on a ticket numbered thirteen; nor started anywhere on Friday; nor opened an umbrella in the house; nor walked under a ladder. And on any large

venture he always consulted a fortuneteller.

Patricia knew, therefore, that Jed would not dare to speak before the three days were up. On the second, the money was to be paid over by Abernethy for the syndicate for the purchase of the trolley.

As Jed came out of the thick, hot atmosphere of the gipsy's booth, a wave of reason and common sense swept over him.

"What an old fool I am to believe her!" he muttered in the depths of his ragged beard. "But then, how in hell does she know so much? And suppose Abernethy does hear of the conduit? Suppose — by Jove! Suppose she tells him! She won't let me speak to him for three days, but I'm damned if I don't watch to see his face when he comes out of there!"

G. W. also hung around the booth watching those who came out. He and Jed avoided each other's eye.

Sir Wemyss Lombard, who heartily disbelieved, but only went because Cornelia made a point of it on behalf of the hospital, returned dragging at his moustache. Marston approached him:

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- "Well, what did she say to you?"
- "Most extraordinary," muttered Sir Wemyss. "She told me about my fiancée, Lady Mary Goddard, and I've never mentioned her to a soul but Mrs. Winthrop."
- "Your fiancée!" exclaimed G. W. "Are you engaged, then?"
- "Most certainly. Ever since last week. She's a ripping girl. Rides as well as your daughter. Beautiful figger, too."
- G. W. took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead. Then he turned on his heel and walked away without speaking. His hands were clasped behind his back and his head bent forward. The Englishman screwed his glass into his eye and watched him.
- "Most extraordinary man," he muttered, "not to congratulate a chap when he says he's engaged! Nor even to offer him a drink. Deuced queer, I must say!"

Cornelia parted the curtains behind Patricia and whispered:

- "What shall I do? Abernethy swears he won't come. He says it's such awful rot. He's been asking for you."
 - "Tell him I've had mine told, and the

gipsy told me about the man who loves me best. Tell him I begged him just for fun to have his told and see if she can describe his sweetheart. If he asks about me any more, tell him I'm having a rent sewed up in my dress (that's the truth), and that I'll be down in fifteen minutes."

"I'll try it," whispered Cornelia.

"But make him hurry, for father is to come back in half an hour, and I must be gone before he comes. Here, take all this money. I may have to fly."

When, a few moments later, the curtains at the entrance were parted, and Lord Abernethy entered, Patricia felt that her time had come. She trembled in every limb. All her former insouciance was gone. She feared discovery. She feared to sink in his esteem. For one wild moment the impulse was upon her to turn and flee. as she shuffled the cards and rocked and crooned, she saw that he was not in the least suspicious, and her courage returned. This was her supreme hour. This was what she had planned and agonized to do. This moment, as far as Patricia Marston

was concerned, was the reason for the whole bazar.

She would not touch his hand with hers for fear of their trembling. She traced the lines in his palm with a curious old stylus with a turquoise in the handle.

"Why do you sigh, good mother?" asked Abernethy. He knew the gipsy formulas, from Henley week and the races at Goodwood and Epsom Downs. He had talked to scores of them.

"Because there is so much to see and so much to tell," murmured Patricia.

Abernethy smiled and handed her a gold piece.

Involuntarily Patricia drew back. Abernethy looked surprised, and for a moment the situation trembled in the balance. Then she recovered herself.

"Thank you, my pretty gentleman," she said. "You will have a rich wife. She will bring you many such."

The gipsy's eyes looked keenly into his.

"That gives me no pleasure, goodwife," he said. "Tell me if I shall win her. What is she like?"

It seemed to Abernethy that the gipsy's lips trembled.

"Her face is fair enough, but to a gentleman like yourself, it will be welcome to know that she loves you rarely, — that she would do anything to save you from the danger which threatens."

"Am I in any danger?" said Abernethy, with a smile.

"Your greatest danger, pretty gentleman, is from thinking too well of yourself."

"Well, I like that!" said the Englishman, stroking his moustache.

"The gipsy wastes no more fine words with you. Believe, or I tell no more."

"I believe you! Go on, my good woman."

"You are not of this land. You do not know the men here, nor their ways. Once you have been warned, but you laughed. To-night the gipsy warns you again. You mock. In two days more it will be too late."

A gleam of interest came into the Englishman's bored face.

"In two days more. What will happen then?"

"You are to pay much money to the old man — the old man who owns all this; but if you do, you are lost. Disgrace waits for you at home. Dishonour here. No more will men trust you with their money, for the money you are to pay is not yours."

Abernethy started and looked keenly at Patricia. But the fever and excitement of it were in her blood and she gave no heed. She waved her hand at him for silence, and he motioned her to proceed.

"I see two long, shining rails. Things whiz by on them. Sparks fly overhead. Bells clang. Women scream. Danger lurks in them. But not to you. Your danger lies in the long, cold grave beneath. The power to make cars fly once lay there. It is forgotten now. But when you have paid the money — the money of your friends — it will be remembered. Mark well the gipsy's words. It will be remembered! For it should not be there!"

In spite of himself, against his strong will and bulldog determination not to be taken in, Abernethy dared not interrupt. Drops of perspiration stood on his brow. Patricia saw them.

"There is no money there — for any man. The old man knows this. He sends to you, who are a stranger, a young man, light of skin and glib of tongue. He makes you feel that he has brought a fortune to you. Do not trust him. He was sent by the old man!"

Abernethy let out just one word — a bad one.

"Together they plan your ruin. All their words are idle. You buy, but you can never sell. The old man lays a trap. He puts it before men's eyes. They read it in large letters. It is all a lie, a lie cunningly planned, by an old man in the mountains and an old man by the sea."

"No railroad!" exclaimed Abernethy, involuntarily. Then he pulled himself together and smiled. The gipsy was dramatic, but he was not going to be flimflammed — not he!

"The gipsy speaks true. But listen. There is more. Three days from now an old man will come to you and tell you of gold in the ground. It is there. Buy. For your friends. For yourself. Honour and riches are in the ground. A woman with

red hair, the colour of the sun god when he sets, owns it. She will tell you true. The young man will build machinery and dig out the gold. The old man will carry it on his steel rails. But pay no money in two days. It is Friday and the thirteenth."

In spite of himself, Abernethy felt a quiver of fear.

- "How can I prove this?" he asked.
- "Tell my words to the dark young man, the lover of the woman with the gold hair. His business is to dig and measure. He will prove it to you."

The gipsy dropped her face forward in her hands.

"Go," she muttered. "I see no more."

She was rocking herself to and fro. Abernethy rose and tossed an additional coin into her lap.

"Stop!" she whispered. "The old man waits to see your face and to question you. Avoid him. Go out this door. Do not talk to him to-night. A girl in pink is waiting for you down-stairs by an open door between two windows. Seek her."

Abernethy, who was in no mood to see Marston or Jed, obeyed the gipsy and "You are no gipsy, woman," he said, sternly. "Who are you, to know the secrets of every man in this manner? Tell me your name, or I will call the mistress of this house."

"It is true that I am no gipsy," said Patricia. "But I know these things, and I have warned you out of friendship. If you are a gentleman, you will release me."

Abernethy released her and stepped back. Patricia flew, rather than ran, and when he came through the drawing-rooms, twenty minutes later, Patricia, in pink, was waiting for him beside an open door between two windows.

CHAPTER VIII

AT THE DENVER CLUB

ATER that night at the Denver Club little was discussed except the brilliance of Mrs. Lowe's bazar, and the skill of the fortune-teller. Some contended that she was a lady, made up as a gipsy, others that she was a professional.

"You needn't tell me," said Jed Brown.

"She was a regular gipsy with the best gift of second sight I ever saw. I've tried 'em all. I've been to that famous one in Louisville—I went down from New York on purpose. I've been to all those mediums in Chicago—over on the West Side. I've been to the best ones everywhere, and I tell you this one lays over every other one I ever saw. You can make all the fun you want, but you'll see old Jed Brown following her advice to beat the band."

Abernethy and Sylvestre looked at each

other. They hated to admit that they put any faith in her words. Finally Sylvestre strolled away and Abernethy followed.

"Did you go to her?" asked the Englishman.

Sylvestre shook his head.

Abernethy removed his cigar and looked at it critically.

"She was no gipsy," he said, tentatively. Again Sylvestre said nothing. understanding human nature in the least, Svlvestre often stumbled on the best way to handle different people, as in this instance, where a confidence from Sylvestre, like that they had just listened to from Jed Brown, would have made the Englishman hesitate to own himself similarly moved. Cornelia, Sylvestre succeeded because he was honest, and clean, and good. And as to his being a trifle stupid, a clever woman rather likes it in a man. It not only shows off her own wit. but is sometimes as soothing and comfortably companionable as to own a big Newfoundland dog.

After a second silence Abernethy squared himself as if to take the plunge and said:

"After due deliberation, however, gipsy

or no, I have decided to follow her advice, for she is a clever woman, a deucedly clever woman, whoever she is."

Sylvestre showed no surprise. He simply went on smoking. He possessed the power of remaining absolutely quiet, — a rare gift in an American, and Abernethy loved him for it. The conversational and physical agility of most American men bored the Englishman to extinction. For example, after a heavy dinner he wished to remain inert; to stagnate; to hibernate, so to speak. He wouldn't have moved even for Patricia, and yet "some damn fool" was for ever suggesting billiards or pool! Just after dinner! Fancy!

"She told me," went on Abernethy, hoping to take a rise out of the quiet American, "to consult you."

Not a muscle in Bob Sylvestre's face moved. Abernethy knocked the ashes from his cigar with a gesture of impatience.

"I would like to engage you, in behalf of the syndicate which I have the honour to represent—"

"No one but an Englishman would say that," thought the American.

"To investigate that trolley. I ought to have done it before, for now the time is short. Investigate particularly what is beneath it. I know that it was once a cable system, but I do not know whether the conduit is still there. If it is, ascertain if there is any danger of our being compelled to remove it. Will you do this for me?"

"I can do it without leaving this room. Marston has bought Jed Brown out, and I hear that he is sore over it. If there is anything crooked about the deal to give away, Jed is my man. Wait for me here."

Jed had been watching the conference of these two out of the corner of his little redbrown eyes. He grinned as Sylvestre approached him. But it was not a pleasant grin. It suggested the grin of the tiger as he saw his prey approaching, only, in this instance, in Sylvestre Jed saw the man who would help him to catch and devour his prey.

Jed had been brooding over the perfidy of Marston and Cheroot, and consuming a beverage which assisted him in the process of stirring himself up. But he was nobody's fool, and he proposed to irritate Sylvestre until there would be two on Marston's trail instead of one. It would only assist in the final project the fortune-teller had outlined to him, anyway. If Jed helped Sylvestre, Sylvestre would be in a frame of mind to assist Jed.

"Let's have a drink," suggested Sylvestre when they had shaken hands.

Jed nodded with alacrity.

- "I want to ask you a few questions, if you don't mind," said the young man. "I understand that you have sold your trolley stock."
 - "Under compulsion," growled Jed.
- "Then you would have liked to keep it. You think it is a good thing?"
- "At present, yes. It is a snap. In two months from now it will be a gold brick!"
 - "How's that?"
- "City council are going to make an election issue of the company's refusal to take up the cable conduit, and will compel the English syndicate to do it."
- "Why is everybody keeping so quiet about it? Abernethy has heard nothing."
 - "Kind of fun to do John Bull. These

Britishers think they are so infernally smart."

"But do you think it is a square deal?" asked Sylvestre.

"It's as fair treatment as we would get from them if we went to London with a proposition to buy anything — besides having to wait thirty years while all the different directors were gathered up from Scotland and France and Egypt for a conference. I wore a path in the floor of the Cecil Hotel once, charging up and down while waiting for a directors' meeting in London. And I had cabled them a month beforehand that I'd be there on a certain day. I never was so mad in my life. Good chance to get even with the whole blamed island in a deal like this."

"You won't get even with them this time," said Sylvestre.

"Why not?" cried Jed, with a start. Could it be possible that the gipsy's words were coming true already?

"Because the English syndicate is not going to buy the trolley. I have been engaged by their representative, Lord Abernethy, to examine into it, and I shall tell them what you have just told me."

The old man's eyes were snapping with eagerness. He reached across the table and seized Sylvestre's arm.

"What will they buy instead?" he whispered.

"I don't know. Here's a coin you just dropped."

Jed took the gipsy's coin with trembling fingers. Already he had forgotten her injunction not to speak of the new project for three days. He pulled himself up with nervous fear. He must be cautious, but to listen was not the same as to broach, he reflected. He fixed his eyes on the young man opposite with ill-concealed eagerness.

"Now one thing more," said Sylvestre.

"I think this business of Marston's owning the town has gone far enough. Why don't you cut the ground from under him? Who are these people he owns, body and soul? If he can buy them, you can release them. Let's have free speech and fair play."

Old Jed Brown grinned. His shrewd old face looked positively queer above his Parismade shirt, his London evening clothes, and the lilies in his buttonhole. The cigarette between his fingers completed the caricature. If he had worn jeans or overalls and a slouch hat, if his cigarette had turned into a short, black pipe, and if a yellow dog had cringed at his heels, these accessories would have matched his weather-beaten face and his little weasel eyes.

The grin with which he greeted Sylvestre's words was irresistibly satirical. It was about as incongruous a suggestion as if a man should sit on the side of his bed in his pyjamas and urge the burglar who was robbing him to reform and join the church.

- "He must just about own the city council," said Sylvestre.
 - "He does," grinned Jed.
 - "Do you know which ones?"
- "Yep. And so do you. They were at that meeting. Sat over by the window and said nothing. Just looked."
- "What were they there for? They don't own any stock."
- "To see that Marston was doing what he had promised 'em he would do. He told 'em he was going to sell out to the English

syndicate, and had asked them to hold back the city council until he had made the deal. He asked 'em to come to the meeting and see for themselves."

Sylvestre gave vent to an exclamation. Then he considered. Jed watched him joyously.

"Then how about this railroad? There never was any chance—"

But Jed interrupted him with a smothered shout.

"Railroad!" he cried. "Railroad! Who said there was any?"

"Well, but the papers — the advertisements — the —"

"Young man," said Jed, laying his hand on Sylvestre's arm, "you want to go to a dentist and have him lance your wisdom teeth through. Make him hurry 'em up, or else go back East where you belong."

Sylvestre coloured with anger.

"Don't get mad. Listen to your Uncle Dudley. Those advertisements were made up by a jim dandy. What do they say? Do they claim to have the stock? No! They say they are 'ready to receive applications for stock.' See? Now who is be-

hind that deal? Hey? Lucius Bunce. Whose brother is he? See? Who put him up to it? Tell me that! The grayest old fox in the bunch! G. W. Marston, of Denver."

"By the Lord!" cried Sylvestre, stung into violent speech, as he remembered his bootless journey to New York and his interview with the New York banker. Sylvestre was slow to anger, but when once he was aroused, he was what men call "an ugly customer."

Jed watched him in glee. It was a jovial sight for the old man to see such fury stirred up against his enemy. Marston had tried to do him, had he? And he had hired his own paid henchman, Jimmie Cheroot, to do the business, had he? And they were both going to make a handsome wad out of it, were they? And old Jed Brown was left out of it, was he? Jed almost snarled these thoughts aloud. Well, watch him stir up the animals. If there was any such thing as crippling G. W. for good and all, he was determined to do it.

"You're mad, are you, sonny?" he said.

"Well, that ain't a circumstance to what G. W. can do!"

"I've heard enough," said Sylvestre, shortly. "And I've a plan in my head. With three of us hot on his trail we ought to be able to catch up with even 'the grayest old fox in the bunch.' But to do it thoroughly we must let the newspapers in."

He looked at Jed significantly.

"I think," said the old man, lighting a long, black cigar, "that I'll help along this reform business of yours. As you say, it ain't right to squeeze the Britishers. Maybe some of 'em are orphans. I think, to-morrow, I'll just step around and see Tappen and Wright. They might be willing to let me assume their obligations to our old college chum — Mr. Marston. I might even" — puff, puff — "offer them a slight inducement to jump head over heels into the campaign issue now. In that case," he paused and blew out the match, "watch for the newspapers day after to-morrow morning."

CHAPTER IX

PATRICIA AND LORD ABERNETHY

N the day after the bazar, Patricia was physically ill. The sight of the house, in the chaos of disorder, sickened her. She read languidly the glowing reports of the bazar's brilliance and success, which the newspapers served up with true Western enthusiasm. Even the congratulations of the beautiful Mrs. Lowe and the thanks of her tired but happy committee stirred her with but feeble gratitude. The reaction had set in. She had perhaps ruined her father. The thought terrified her. But she was brave enough to say to Mrs. Lowe:

"In what bank do you deposit your hospital funds?"

"Why, I thought I would put them in your father's, my dear. Mr. Lowe suggested it. Why?"

- "You dear child!" laughed Mrs. Lowe.
 "I am sure no one would even think of such a thing."
- "Perhaps not. Still, to please me, will you do it?"
- "Why, certainly. And I am sure, my dear, that such delicacy is very rare to find."

Patricia coloured with shame at receiving praise for a quality she had not exercised. All she was thinking of was the safety of those funds. Besides, she wanted that cheque of hers cashed before the cloud burst, for she had no idea how seriously or how lightly her father would be affected by his failure to sell the trolley. She hoped to "squeeze him," as the saying went, with sufficient severity to make him remember her as a dangerous opponent.

It was curiously characteristic of her that she did not in the least dread her father's discovery of her acts. In fact, she

[&]quot;Because I would rather you didn't. It would look better, I think, to take them somewhere else. It is a large sum of money, and I don't want any one to think it will be of the slightest use to my father."

looked forward to it with some anticipation. She would have been glad if she could have fought it out with him that day. It would have served as a mental restorative to her exhausted mind and body.

As for her feelings toward Abernethy, she could not have analyzed them. At one moment, she longed to have him know what she had done as proof of how valiantly she loved him and how greatly she had dared for his sake. At another, she shook with dread at the thought of such a discovery.

To Patricia, love had come as a whirl-wind. It had swept her off her feet with relentless force. She was a pagan in many respects, and loved fiercely, as pagans do. Civilization had no part in Patricia's passion for Abernethy. And it was a pale, gentle, self-contained past product of the highest civilization which had so won the primeval love of this daughter of the untamed West.

She was at times wholesomely afraid of him, as a fiery woman must be of the man she loves if she is to live happily with him. At other times she was fiercely maternal in her rage to defend and protect him from his

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enemies. In one mood she felt very simple and young and wholly dependent upon his wider knowledge of the world and society. In another she felt years older and wiser than he, and longed to beg him to do nothing without first consulting her. It was well for her love that she never yielded to this desire and so pricked the bubble of an Englishman's self-esteem.

Abernethy had listened to Sylvestre's report of his conversation with Jed Brown with mixed feelings. He felt as if an unseen hand had snatched him back at the moment he was about to slide over a precipice. He was keenly alive to the fact that some woman had saved, not only his money, but his honour. The question was, who was the woman?

Naturally Patricia's name was the first to flash into his mind. But as his thoughts wandered to the rôle she would have been obliged to play in order to warn him, not even his good opinion of himself would permit him to believe that a daughter would so far prefer a lover's safety to that of her own father. Nor could it be Mrs. Winthrop, for she was in love with Sylvestre,

and could have no motive. Friendship, the friendship of a lifetime, might so dare, but not the ephemeral acquaintanceship which he had with her. Yet the woman, whoever she might prove to be, was clever, beastly clever. Who, in the name of Heaven, could it be but Patricia? blood coursed swiftly through his veins as his suspicions returned again and yet again to this girl. What if, after all, she did love him enough for that? What a wife she would make! And how the history of such an unprecedented act of devotion would make his people sit up! His wife, were she American or Hottentot, would need no further introduction to the proud old house of Strowther than that.

He was very honourable and chivalrous, was this descendant of the Goddards, and he had so far abstained from asking Patricia to be his wife, partly because of her great wealth and because he had hoped to have something to offer her besides an old name and an empty title. Nor was he sure of her love for him. Now, however, he was restless from dread and fear. If, as Jed Brown more than hinted, the attack of the newspapers and public opinion and the opposition forces should be opened up suddenly on Marston, and he was caught owning not only all his own stock but all of Jed Brown's, he would be practically ruined, for, at the first sign of the weakening of the Despot of Denver, all the jackals would be upon him in an instant. There might even be a run on the bank and total annihilation might result. In that case, Patricia might as well be a Capulet and he a Montague and be done with it, as far as her father's consent and any amicable alliance was to be thought of. He did not, you see, know Patricia Marston in the least.

On the other hand, if it should prove that Patricia had really been the fortune-teller, it might be wise to secure her promise before the whole affair came out in the newspapers, in which case, there was no time to be lost. While not understanding the heights and depths of Patricia's character, he was coming to depend upon her resource-fulness and to lean, in a manner, on her strength.

Thus it was that, in the afternoon of the day following the bazar, Abernethy sud-

denly decided to call on Patricia, to ascertain, if possible, where he stood with her.

To say that he was ill at ease, while he was waiting for his name to be announced to Patricia, would be to state the case mildly. The only thing which gave him any confidence was the sight of Patricia's equally great consternation as she entered the room. She actually turned pale. As she gave him her hand, neither spoke. Abernethy fumbled with his monocle and dropped his hat. A faint twitching of Patricia's lip showed itself. But Abernethy had no sense of humour.

- "You are laughing at me," he said.
- "No, indeed I am not!" said Patricia. "How can you think so?"
- "I'm nervous, I suppose. I want to tell you something—to ask you something, and it will make me out such an awful ass, I am afraid to begin."

Instantly Patricia divined what was in the air. She turned cold.

Abernethy got up and stood near her, with his arm on the mantel. He drew his gloves through his hand as he talked.

"You must forgive me if I seem too bold,

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but no man who loved you could be mistaken. I suspected your voice last night and the glance of those eyes, but when I caught you by the arms, I was sure. You were the gipsy in the fortune-teller's booth!"

Patricia's colour came and went.

"Suppose I was?" she said at last.

He bent over her.

"My God, Patricia! Do you know what you are acknowledging?"

She made no reply. But she looked up at him with a frightened, helpless glance. His eyes burned into hers.

"You are admitting that to save me you sacrificed your own father. You jeopardized your own fortune. You may have impoverished yourself. And for me! You are admitting that — that you love me!"

A quiver of emotion swept over the girl from head to foot, but her eyes never wavered. He held them with his own.

"Patricia!"

He knelt on one knee and took her face between his hands.

"Patricia!" he said again.

She smiled at him, half dreamily, al-

though her lips burned and her cheeks flamed red.

- "Is it so strange?" she said.
- "That you should love me like that? Yes! It is strange that any woman should care more for a penniless lover than for such a fortune as you have imperilled. But perhaps you don't realize what you have done?"
- "Oh, yes, I do!" said Patricia. "I have sacrificed my father. Well, such a man deserves to be sacrificed! If he had made his money honestly I would feel differently. But he has no sense of honour. He doesn't care how decent people feel - how his own daughter feels! Don't think I took this way of convincing him of my sincerity without exhausting all other methods! I have argued with him, pleaded with him, threatened him with this very thing, and what did he do? He laughed at me - and gave me a cheque! I hate his money! I don't enjoy this house or fine clothes or horses and carriages! They are not ours! They belong to honest men who have trusted my father, and he took advantage of their weaknesses and betrayed them. I would

rather walk barefoot through life as the companion of an honest man than to be the daughter of such a father and surrounded by all this. Does that shock you? Does it sound unfilial and disloyal and all the rest of it? Perhaps I am wrong, but I never believed in being blindly loyal to parents who were unworthy of respect just because one happens to be born their daughter! It's all nonsense! It's all wrong! The only thing to be loyal to is honour—wherever you find it, and I find it in you!"

Abernethy's pale face was flushed with feeling. He drew the girl closer to his breast and hid his face in her hair.

"I didn't know that such a woman as you existed!" he said. "Those are men's ideas you have been uttering, and very honest and loyal men's at that. I didn't know that women had such a keen sense of honesty. You will forgive my saying that?"

"It is true — that's why I forgive it," answered Patricia. "That is why I don't get on with women very well. That is why I love Cornelia Winthrop."

"But oh," interrupted Abernethy, unwill-

ing to have the conversation swerve to Mrs. Winthrop or anywhere, in fact, except back to the subject of the wonder and beauty of such a love as he had discovered in Patricia, "how could you be so magnificent! I can hardly believe yet that you gave it all up for How can I ever love you enough to repay you for such a sacrifice? woman you are! Surely there is no one else in all the world like you!"

Now if Patricia had been a woman of the world, she would have accepted that statement as soul-satisfying and quite as it should be, and she would have let it go at But in the divine generosity of her eager young soul, she flew at once to the task of disproving it, in order to give a friend her just due.

"Oh, but you don't know," she cried. "I gave it up because I loved you! It was easy to do that because you were on the other side of it, and I was doing it to save you - to warn you. Women will always dare such things for the men they love. But for an abstract idea? For good, just because it is right and honourable? Will

they throw away a fortune or even an opportunity to make one? Tell me that!"

"I am afraid," said Abernethy, "that they will not. Unless, as you say, there is a man in the case."

"Yet Cornelia Winthrop did just that! And there was no man in the case — unless you could be the man in two cases!"

"I? What have I to do with it?"

"Everything. She did it for you and for me. And in so doing, she destroyed all her hopes of money and all Sylvestre's prospects. And they wanted to be married!"

"How do you mean? Tell me," said Abernethy.

"Why," and Patricia almost stuttered in her eagerness, "you knew of course that Cornelia was here to sell her mine, didn't you? And you know it is situated in Monte Cristo County near Agua. Well, Cornelia and Sylvestre were planning and working in every way possible to have the new transcontinental railroad go through Agua and buy her property."

She paused a moment and looked at Abernethy.

"Didn't she know that there was to be no

railroad? That it was all part of the plplan to sell the trolley?" he asked.

"Go on! Use the word you intended to!" cried Patricia. "It was a plot! No, she didn't know it. Any more than you did. I found it out accidentally and went and told her that you must be warned, and that she must help me warn you. I remember now how pale she grew and how suddenly she walked to the window and stood staring out at the mountains. I thought she took no interest in my troubles and I felt angry with her — brute that I was! When all the time she was fighting down her disappointment. The shock of suddenly realizing that if you did not buy the trolley the railroad would not go through her property and would leave her mine and the town of Agua as it had always been, was almost too much for her. But realizing all that, she helped me to warn you. There's a woman for you!"

"Do you mean to tell me she was going to sacrifice her gold mine to the railroad?"

"Certainly. Why, that mine of hers won't be sold until somebody comes along with millions and a wild desire to sink

them!" cried Patricia, with her eager eyes on the Englishman's face.

"I have only just learned in the last day or two what a valuable mine it is," said Abernethy, stroking his moustache. Patricia afterward learned to watch for that familiar movement whenever he was thinking deeply. Then after a pause he added: "Did you know that I was instructed to buy mining property, and that I had to work hard to persuade my father's friends to buy the trolley instead?"

"I didn't until day before yesterday. Then Sylvestre told me. Did you — have you — would you consider looking into Cornelia's property?" stammered Patricia.

Abernethy laughed outright. He leaned nearer and pressed her face close to his. It was burning hot and her breath came short.

"Anybody would think, you dear thing, that you were trying to sell me something of your own, from your embarrassment," he said. "I have thought of it. In fact, I have all of Sylvestre's data about it in my pocket and I am going into the thing thoroughly. Does that please you?"

"Please me!" cried the girl, radiantly.

- "It delights me! And then, too, it is only — justice! Justice and common gratitude."
 - "Why, how is that?" asked Abernethy.
- "It was Cornelia who suggested the fortune-teller. She gathered herself together in the very teeth of her own disappointment and we decided on it that day. Oh, can you fathom such nobility as that? I didn't know that she was counting on such a thing until a long time afterward. And she has led such a sad life in spite of her wealth and beauty."
- "I heard that she had a brute of a husband," said Abernethy.
- "She did. He broke her heart and went through her fortune and left her with just this mine that he had vainly tried to sell for eight years. The hopes of both Cornelia and Sylvestre were pinned to the railroad. And they looked forward to a quiet life with no great amount of money, but happiness in each other."
- "By Jove!" said the Englishman, whose emotions, although deep-lying, had been stirred, "if her mine is half as good as Sylvestre says, she and that young man won't

be obliged to live in obscurity and dull respectability. For if we buy it, Sylvestre thinks Jed Brown will join forces with us and continue his railroad down to Agua. But he won't give us his decision until day after to-morrow."

Patricia flung back her head and burst into a peal of laughter. Abernethy looked at her in surprise.

"It's because the gipsy told him to dream three nights on her coin before speaking!" she cried. "He was so wild to ruin father that he wanted to hunt you up and make a deal with you that night! And that would have ruined things!"

"Then you foresaw all this? Patricia, girl! I am beginning to be afraid of you."

Abernethy was not the first Englishman to be surprised and a little frightened at the cleverness and versatility of the American girl. It did him no harm to stand in a little wholesome awe of her.

"Don't worry about his not going in with you, if you give him a chance. He has known all about that mine for years, and it is my private belief that he built that ten miles of road for this very purpose about

eight years ago when there was a good prospect of Mr. Winthrop selling it to a syndicate of New York men. Father said something about it, but he didn't make it very clear."

Lord Abernethy's eves flashed with repressed excitement.

"If it is as good as all that and as well known, it will not only be the means of saving my pride, but it will be quite a feather in my cap to buy it," he said. "I confess to a desperate shrinking from explaining the whole matter to our syndicate. But to offer them a better proposition, and along the lines they first wished for, will not only remove the little dissatisfaction which now exists among them, but will open up their pockets to greater investments. We may yet make a colossal fortune out of this thing. And then, Patricia, I shall have something to offer you!"

"Don't," cried the girl, sharply. "I have a little of my own, a legacy from my grandmother. It is enough for us. Don't leave me here! Take me away from it all! I'm sick of the atmosphere of the whole place.

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I want to go — with you! I can't exist with these people!"

Abernethy needed no more.

- "Would you?" he breathed. "Would you dare risk it with me, knowing no more of me than you do? Don't you need wealth to make you happy? Could you get along without all this?"
- "How little you know me," whispered Patricia.

CHAPTER X

THE TWO MARSTONS

BEFORE leaving Patricia, Abernethy had begged her permission to write or speak to her father immediately, but Patricia had so repeatedly been obliged to listen to her father's contemptuous remarks about "that damned Englishman," that she exacted a promise from her lover to wait a few days and give events a reasonable time to develop.

In this, Patricia was urged by a twofold motive. First, she knew that no consent obtained from her father now would hold good when he discovered that Abernethy's syndicate would not buy the trolley. In the second place, she wished to confess to her father her part in the transaction, bear his reproaches, and stem the tide of his fury. After all this was done, she would feel at liberty to believe any promise of clemency

he might be persuaded to make, for G. W.'s anger was as short-lived as it was intense and profane in its expression.

Fortunately for her eager temper, she would not have long to wait, for the next day was the last of Abernethy's option and the one set for the payment of the money, should no untoward event occur to disturb his decision.

Patricia, unable to sleep, rose early and was off before breakfast for a gallop on her chestnut mare. She was horrified on crossing Logan Avenue to see that one of its handsomest houses was burned to the ground and that the ruins were still smouldering. The Denver Fire Department was so excellent that she wondered that nothing had been saved. The engines were still pumping, and an enormous crowd prevented her going close enough to learn anything of the particulars. As it must have burned early in the night she hurried home to see the morning papers. The house burned was that of Judge Beckwith, and one of which Denver was peculiarly proud, as it boasted a fine library and many valuable engravings.

The fire, if it had been instigated by Jed

Brown, could not have served his purpose better, for the overhead trolley wires had prevented the working of the hook and ladder company and had materially aided in the complete destruction of the judge's elegant home.

Judge Beckwith, honourable, upright, and fearless, was one of the few men whom Marston did not own, and with his statement to the press of the chief reason his possessions were destroyed, the press of Denver, stimulated by Jed Brown, took a long breath, rolled up its sleeves, so to speak, and went to work.

Seldom has any man been treated to so varied yet universal invective as that which was served up to George Washington Marston on the day after the fire. To say that he was handled without gloves is not to do justice to the spirited journalism of the West. It would express their method more concisely to say that in lieu of gloves every editorial fist was equipped with brass knuckles. They began with G. W.'s arrival in Denver and opened up every sharp deal and too shrewd transaction of his shady career. They aired the trolley affair. They

published Abernethy's statement that his syndicate's option would be allowed to lapse. They raged against the abandoned conduit. They demanded in the name of the city of Denver, of the great Commonwealth in which they resided, that the trolley company should remove it. They showed how G. W. had crowded Jed Brown out of the company on an almost forgotten option, just in time to prevent his making the profit which was soon to flow into Marston's pocket. They jeered at Marston's disappointment and derided him for owning three-quarters of the stock.

"Caught With The Goods On" were the headlines of one particularly enterprising sheet.

Patricia dared not meet her father at breakfast. She sent out for copies of all the papers, after having glanced at the headines, and read them in her room. She heard the slamming of the two library doors and knew that her father was reading them also.

Several reporters called, but were refused admittance. Finally, from behind closed

blinds, Patricia saw her father leave the house and start for the bank.

He was gone all day. Patricia knew that there would be no use in seeking her mother, for Mrs. Marston would know nothing of it. Mrs. Lowe and her committee tactfully kept away. Cornelia telephoned, but Patricia was in no mood to see even Cornelia.

Abernethy sent some tiger-lilies with a note which delighted Patricia.

"Both roses and violets seem tame when I think of you and all you have done for me," he wrote. "These fiercely beautiful flowers are strangely emblematic of your magnificent courage and the purity and singleness of your purpose. You have fought like a little tigress and you are as pure and sweet as a lily."

He called in the afternoon and was immensely diverted at seeing his flowers in a tall vase on the piano in the music-room, while Patricia sat down at the instrument and sang, with an inimitable accent, that song from "Aunt Hannah," "You is mah lily — mah tiger-lily!"

Abernethy was delighted. Her sense of humour, perhaps because his own was not

abnormally developed, seemed to him irresistible. An English girl in her place would have been so bowled over by the sentiment of his note that she would have quoted Cowper to him in return. He found Patricia's way much more exhilarating, for in spite of her fun he read in her expressive eyes that his words had been amply appreciated.

After he had gone Patricia had not long to wait before her father arrived. It proved that the girl was no coward in that she dared to follow him into the library after she had seen the storm in his face.

He was not sorry to see her. His rage demanded an outlet, and his daughter was familiar with his bursts of fury and his frightful profanity. On this occasion, he not only uttered all his old oaths, but on the spur of the moment he invented some new ones of a particularly fantastic and descriptive pattern.

Perhaps it was the softening and refining influence of her new friendship with Cornelia and her love for Abernethy, but something caused the girl to shrink in sudden horror from her father's familiar invective.

"I tell you, Patrichy," he said, finally, "you wouldn't sit there so quietly if you knew how damned near ruined your old father is. I had let everything else slide while I tried to sell this ——— trolley. I made a mistake — a big mistake — in crowding Jed Brown out of his share in the profits. for if I had left him in, he wouldn't have rotted on me. Do you know what he did? He went and hunted up, helped by that little skunk Cheroot (just you wait until I can get at him!), every man in the city council and in the newspaper line who owed me money, and he released 'em! Think of that for a dirty back-hander at me! have cost him a pretty penny, but old Jed is as mean as an Indian when he wants revenge, and he'd spend his last cent to get even. That loosed every hell-hound in town and to-day they all landed on me. Have you seen the papers?"

[&]quot;Yes," said Patricia. "I read them all."

[&]quot;Pretty reading, weren't they?"

[&]quot;I must say I think you deserved it," said Patricia, quietly.

G. W. glared at her.

[&]quot;What?" he shouted.

"I must say I think you deserved every word they said — and more," she repeated. "They don't know everything. For instance, they don't know some of the things on you that I do."

The old man's fingers worked convulsively. If Patricia had been a man, he would have sprung at her throat. But the girl sat quiet and defenceless before him, and he knew that she was not afraid of him. She looked at him scornfully.

"You have defied public opinion for years," she said. "There wasn't one line in the papers to-day that was news to you. What are you so hot about?"

"Because I'm caught, I suppose," said G. W., his grim sense of humour not deserting him even in this crisis, "with the goods on. It isn't pleasant to be caught, Patrichy."

"No, but you never would be warned. How many times have I begged you not to go on as you were doing? How often have I told you that this time would surely come?"

"I know you have, Patrichy, but I never believed you. I thought I could pull

through. I never counted on treachery from an old friend!"

"Oh!" cried Patricia, vehemently. "You never counted on your own treachery coming home to you! You have been ruined by the very methods you have used to ruin others. You induced people to trust you that you might trade on their weaknesses and rob them. Now you have got a taste of your own medicine. The two you most trusted betrayed you, and you've only got what you deserved."

"The two? Who else besides Jed?"

"I am going to marry Lord Abernethy," said Patricia, with apparent irrelevance. "Think it over."

G. W. possessed the self-control in a crisis which had made him what he was. Not a muscle of his face moved at this extraordinary piece of news. His quick mind flew backward and pieced a little here and a little there until he almost saw the truth.

"Ah, ha!" he said, scratching his bristly chin. "Then it was you who told him about the abandoned conduit, and upset the whole apple cart, was it?"

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- "Did I or did I not plead with you not to go on with this thing?"
 - "You did."
 - "Did you refuse me?"
 - "As I remember it, seems to me, I did."
- "Well, it may interest you to know that I was the gipsy fortune-teller night before last."

The two Marstons, father and daughter, stared straight into each other's eyes across the library-table. Patricia's, at that moment, had the same cold, fearless, steely glare that G. W.'s enemies had learned to dread. Her father recognized and admired it, even in that supreme crisis, when in his fury he could have struck her dead for thwarting him.

- "You deliberately ruined me, then, did you? Your own father, to save your lover?"
 - "That's what I did."
- "It may interest you to know that Crossfuylen predicts a run on the bank tomorrow."
- "It doesn't concern me," said Patricia.

 "My money isn't invested where you can touch it."

Marston changed his tactics.

"And is this the reward I get for having slaved all my life to make money for you?"

Patricia laughed. It was so exactly G. W.'s own mirthless laugh that the old man started. Verily she was a chip off the old block and there was no bluffing her.

"You'll change your tune, miss, when you find what it is to be poor. You've never known what it was. You've been fed and lodged like a princess. You've never had your will crossed since you were a baby. I'll be glad to see you come down to hard pan, you ungrateful hussy. And as to that skunk of an Englishman, with a watch on his wrist and bells on his toes—say, Patrichy, why don't he wear a ring in his nose?"

"Oh, father, why will you go to so much trouble to be vulgar? Surely I am not worth the effort," said Patricia, wearily.

"He hasn't got a cent. You'll be as poor as Job's turkey," said her father.

"Perhaps so. But he and Sylvestre are investigating Mrs. Winthrop's mine with a view to buying it for his syndicate, and Jed Brown is thinking of continuing his road down to Agua and going in with

them," said the girl, with elaborate carelessness.

Her shot told. G. W.'s red face turned purple. His lips drew back over his teeth like the snarl of a tiger.

- "Is that your doing too?" he hissed.
- "I believe the gipsy suggested it," said Patricia.

Then Marston broke loose and treated the situation as it seemed to him to deserve. He skipped nothing, neither Patricia, Abernethy, nor any man or woman concerned in his present unfortunate predicament. He cursed them all, and Patricia sat and listened. It was what she wanted. After airing his emotion, her father would be amenable to reason. When he paused for sheer lack of breath, the girl leaned forward and said:

"Now, father, listen to me. I'm sick of this whole thing. I am sick of your way of doing business. I am tired of being despised by honest people. I want to get out of it all, and I took the only way I saw to do it. You say you are ruined, but I know you are not. You are just chagrined at being done by your own methods. Your

vanity is hurt. You are mad at me, at Jed, at Abernethy, and at everybody except the only one you have a right to be mad at, and that's yourself. It's every bit your own fault. You brought me up to think such things were right, and when the time came I put my knowledge to good use. I've saved the money and the honour of the man I love. And I'd do it again, so don't think I'm weakening. I'd kill anybody who stood in my way! Oh, I am your own daughter, you see!

"Now there is no use in your saying I sha'n't marry him, for you know I am going to do it. You've only been wasting your breath. But listen. I'm ready to make a bargain with you. Suppose I could suggest something to you which would more than get your money back. Suppose it would make people think well of you—better than they ever did before. What then?"

The old man had never admired his daughter as during this interview when she had been most impertinent, most unfilial, most unbearable, in fact. She had taken the only method, reprehensible though

it was, to subdue her tigerish old father and reduce him to a civilization where it would be safe for Abernethy to address him — unarmed. Even in the midst of his anger, the thought would intrude itself that it was "Patrichy," his own girl, who had done him at last. It was the instinct of the habitual gambler. His respect for her, therefore, induced him to listen carefully to her proposal and even to make liberal terms with her.

- "What will I do? Well, I'll tell you. I won't make any fuss about your marrying that that Englishman, and I'll give you the handsomest wedding that Denver ever saw."
- "That isn't enough," said Patricia, shortly.
- "Well," said her father, stroking his face to hide a grin of amusement, "I'll give you a house and —"
 - "Well, go on," said Patricia, impatiently.
 - "Carriage and horses."
- "Oh father, what is the use of trifling?" cried the girl. "Will you give me half of what you make? Half your trolley stock—if I can make it pay?"

"Now mind, that's a bargain, is it?"

"Here's my hand on it."

"I'd rather have your hand writing on it. Just sign your name to this, will you?"

G. W. put on his glasses with a look at his daughter which might mean anything.

"Who drew this up?" he asked.

"A lawyer."

"Patrichy, you're a little devil."

He drew the inkstand toward him and signed a legal contract which bound him.

"Now let her go," said her father.

"You know very well," began his daughter, "how powerful Judge Beckwith's influence is with the best people of Denver. Now then, as I look at it, you are more injured, from a business point of view, by his statements of the danger of the trolley wires than by any of the other things the papers said against you. Isn't that so?"

"Shouldn't wonder if it was," replied her father.

"Well, you are face to face with the proposition of being obliged to take up the

[&]quot;Yes, I will! I'll make you an even partner," cried the old man, his eyes snapping at the prospect. "What's your idea?"

conduit. Now, just fall in with public sentiment — go it one better for once in your life — and put the trolley wires in the conduit!"

For a moment an intense silence reigned. Finally the old man leaned across and held out his hand:

- "Patrichy," he said, "I never was so sorry in my life as I am this moment that you aren't a man."
 - "Then you think the plan a good one?"
- "I only think what chuckle-headed asses the company was not to think of it when we changed the road from a cable to a trolley. Lord! Lord! And to be taught such a stroke by a woman — a little girl like you."

Patricia laughed.

- "There's one thing I'm sorry for," he added, "and that is, if you are so hell-bent on marrying an Englishman that you didn't take the other fellow Sir Wemyss Lombard."
- "But he didn't want me, father. He's engaged to a beautiful girl in England."
- "That's nothing. You could have cut her out if you'd half tried. Why, that man,

Patrichy, can drink a quart of whiskey, of Scotch, mind you, and strong as lye, all by himself with nobody to help him, between dinner and bedtime, and walk up-stairs, by the Lord, without touching the banisters!"

Patricia burst into a shout of laughter.

- "Is that your only reason for preferring him to Lord Abernethy?"
 - "But what a head it shows!"
- "How little head it shows! Think of him in ten years! And think of his wife! No, thank you, father. I'll keep Lord Abernethy, if you don't mind."

The old man sighed.

- "Patrichy, promise me one thing. If you have any influence with him, get him to throw away that damned bracelet-watch."
- "I will, if you'll give him a repeater like yours," said the girl, dimpling.
- "I'll do it! I'll do it! I'll order it tomorrow! Anything on God's earth to get a man to leave off earrings and bracelets."

The old man rose.

"God! I'm sorry it's night and I can't begin this thing for twelve hours," he said, pacing up and down.

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A cautious knock at the door came just then.

"A reporter to see Mr. Marston," said the maid.

"You see, father, now you won't have to wait. You can begin to-night."

The old man stood and watched her as she left the room. Then he shook his head with a gusty sigh.

"Lord! Lord! Why wasn't Patrichy a boy?" he said.

THE END.

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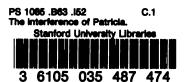
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